1851-5

THE

WRITINGS OF DOUGLAS JERROLD.

COLLECTED EDITION.

VOLUME IV.

CAKES AND ALE.

CAKES AND ALE.

BY

DOUGLAS JERROLD.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, 11, BOUVERIE STREET.
1852.

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PREFACE.

CAKES and ALE are of many-sorted flour, and many-sorted barley. Then there are the spices, the condiments, the milk, and honey and eggs, that give character and individuality to the great family of CAKES; and then there is the born faculty of the cake-maker—for do not certain babies come into the world with a hand for a light crust?—the faculty bestowed by housewife Nature on her favourite little ones; bounteously touched with a delicacy of palm and finger, denied to so many of her clay-fisted progeny. With the same flour, and the same milk and eggs and spices, how different may be the grand result of combination, *the* CAKE!—From one hand, how light and melting—from another, dead dough! Even as to two men lie open the same stores of mother English; the very self-same words in self-same quantities: yet what very different CAKES—that is, BOOKS—the two men will compound therefrom.

And as with CAKES, so with ALE. Let there be the same barley, the same hops, the same water impregnated with the same properties, and—two brewers! What is this? Melted topaz, liquid amber,—with here and there just a filament of hop; no, not hop; but the feather of the wing of a fairy flail-killed

while sleeping in the beard of the venerable barley. And what is this? Sour puddle: doomed by Zeus—struck flat by thunderbolt? Not so: nothing but the thick brains of the uninspired brewer. As with ale, so with bookman's ink. One pen shall make the fluid sparkle with sparks immortal; another shall make it mud.

CAKES of several sorts are here set forth: ALES of various kinds. What they may be to the taste, it is for the taster to pronounce. It was the property of manna—writes a certain Doctor—that it tasted in the mouth of the eater of whatsoever thing the eater willed. Goodnature and a willingness to be pleased may in like manner in some degree assist him or her who would eat a cake. He may at first reject its flavour; yet afterwards endure, commend it. Dear lady, did you ever try to eat an olive? Yes—and couldn't abide it. No; and doubtless for this reason; you did not womanfully try to eat it: otherwise you would have found that, with a perseverance of chewing—(even Venus and Diana must chew)—would have come a sweet, nourishing flavour, in no way a part of the salt, acrid touch that stung your mouth, and suddenly puckered your lips like a rosebud. Thus it may be with one of the stories—that is, one of the CAKES—before you. It may at first seem sharp, but go on, encourage yourself to taste it—*chew it.* And for the ALES,—do not pronounce them all bitter. They are of various kinds; flat, weak, and poor, if you will; but if any of them be decidedly bitter, do not think the bitterness that of wormwood, but of hop that has grown in sun—yes, and in rain; of hop that had far better never have been if, although it may have a bitter taste in the mouth, it carry not some tonic warmth to the heart.

And so, gentles all, whether you taste the CAKES and ALE set before you in summer garden or by winter fire,—may the trees

still wave harmony to your thoughts, and the flowers look gladness in your eyes,—may the sea-coal fire crackle lusty defiance to the cold without, and the cricket chirp the louder as the wind rises at the casement.

On the first publication of this collection of stories and essays it was

Dedicated to

THOMAS HOOD;

A WRITER

WHOSE VARIOUS PEN TOUCHED ALIKE THE SPRINGS OF LAUGHTER,
AND THE SOURCE OF TEARS.

This humble offering is herewith renewed; with the expression of a regret, that it was necessary for Thomas Hood still to do one thing, ere the wide circle and the profound depth of his genius were to the full acknowledged: that one thing was—to die.

LONDON, *September* 11, 1852.

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gazed on the convulsed frame of the dreamer, heard with bitter pleasure his half-stifled moans and sobs.

In a few minutes, the old man, with astonished looks, returned to the chamber. "God help us!" he cried, "'tis true—too true! Poor wretch! He is come to beg for mercy—he is come to ask for leave to tarry in the forest. Poor Rupert! a simple, honest soul."

"He will not listen to him—he will not"——

"Hark!" said the old man, as the chimes sounded from the neighbouring church—"hark! 'tis noon."

"Not so. I think it wants an hour," said Ernest; and he placed himself before the old man, who sought to wake his master.

"I say, 'tis noon," cried the old man—"Listen, boy, listen"——

"One,"—and Ernest told the first stroke of the clock——

"Two,"—and the old man counted.

"Three,"——

"Four,"——

"Five,"——

"Six,"——

"Seven."

Leaving the domestics counting the hours, we beg the reader to quit with us the chamber of affluence for the home of affliction.

CHAPTER II.

It was winter in its most savage mood. The tops of the forest-trees were heaped with snow—the earth was hard as granite—and the wind howled like a wounded monster through the wood. Desolation seemed at the very heart of things. Such was the season, when a woman with a child upon her knees, sat in the ruin of an unroofed hut. She did not weep, but looked as though the tears were frozen in her eyes. Misery never crouched itself in a more squalid, miserable corner. As the child sobbed, the mother bent her face, and muttered comfort to it; then cast her eyes upwards, and shook her head at the unpitying heaven.

"May the dry sticks they've taken from us roast 'em!"—cried a lad, lying on his belly at the hearth, and blowing with his mouth among some twigs wet with the snow.

" 'Twill kindle yet," said the woman languidly.

" The wood is green, and hisses like a snake. Dame," and here the boy, turning his head showed a vacant, lumpish face, in which cunning would mix itself with wildness,—" dame, I think they've left their hearts in the logs," and the cold, blue, staring eyes of the boy gleamed, and, placing his fingers in his matted flaxen hair, he stared and chuckled.

" My child—my child ! " cried the woman.

The boy flung himself down again, again puffed, and blew among the sodden, smoking sticks,—" Ho ! it will blaze yet," he cried—" it will blaze ! Ugh ! it's out ! " and he turned himself round, and, raising himself upon his knees, cried suddenly, " Not a spark, dame—not a spark."

" No no, Swithin—'twill burn," said the mother.

" Yes," and the boy leered at his mistress, " if the good fairies will come and blow it. Swithin can do no more ; " and he rose, and almost burying one of his hands in his mouth, he blew at it, and violently beat the other at his side.

" He will die !—my child will die ! " cried the mother.

" Ha ! ha !" and the idiot grinned and jumped.

" Why, why do you laugh ? " asked the woman, angrily.

Swithin's eyes were blue and bright as burning sulphur, and he chuckled forth—" To think what I would do should little Stephen die ! "

" What would you do ? " said the woman.

" Ha ! ha ! ha ! I'd send his worship mad. Ha ! ha ! Mad—mad—mad ! Dame, I'd sit at his golden gate with the corpse on my knees ! I'd run after his bright coach with the corpse at my back ! I'd face him at the church door with the corpse in my arms. Ho ! ha ! ha ! " and the simpleton rubbed his hands.

" Peace ! you are mad again," said the woman ; " peace, and try once more."

" For what," asked the boy, with his usual sullen look ; " for what, I ask ? You might as well think to fire Witch Margery's broomstick."

" You will not do it—you will not ? Tell me," cried the mother, with emotion, " tell me ?—the roof they've torn from our heads, how long did it shelter you ? "

" Eh ? " asked the boy, and his features darkened, and he stood looking at the ends of his fingers, the tears dropping upon them. " Ha ! ha ! I only took a bit of rest, dame ; the smoke has set my eyes a running ; " and instantly he turned to the hearth, and, flinging himself down, again blew among the embers. " 'Twill burn soon," said the boy ; " very soon, now—very soon."

" No, no, no," exclaimed the woman, who, having laid down

the child, stood behind the boy. "The fire is dead—dead as the world's charity. God be with us!"

"Amen—amen!" cried a deep, manly voice; and Rupert, the woodman, again stood before his ruin of a home.

"Husband," cried the wife, "hast been to the mansion?"

"Ay," answered the man. and he folded his arms and groaned.

"Rupert!" shrieked the woman.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"You look as you never did look before," and the woman gazed fearfully in the face of her husband. "It is your face, indeed—but not your eye; your lip, but not the smile that I have seen there."

"I am changed, then?" asked Rupert in a hollow tone.

"Your voice, too! Oh, call me Edith—say Edith!" and the woman wound her arms about her husband's neck, and looked into his eyes as though she would have looked into his brain. "Say Edith!"

"Edith!"

"'Tis not the voice I have heard before!" cried the woman, and she became white as death. "Am I alone then?"

"Edith," said Rupert, "I *am* changed: my walk hath made me a new man."

"Thou hast seen his worship then? He has forgiven all—will let us stay here? Is it not so?"

The husband placed his arm around his wife, and, with the face and tone of a man determined, spoke to her. "Thou dost know every path of the forest, Edith. Well—choose, girl. Choose, I say—they are all before us!"

"No hope?" exclaimed the wife.

"For six-and-thirty years," said Rupert, "I have lived a fool—have been an honest slave. I have traded with honesty, and what is my estate?"

"Not a log," cried Swithin, with a chuckle—"not a log!"

"A roofless hut and a cold hearth," said Rupert.

"More, Rupert, more," said Edith, passionately: "you have the respect, the good word of many."

"True, I had forgot," said Rupert. "Swithin, boy!"

"Goodman, master," answered the lad, and approached the woodman.

"So, boy," asked Rupert, "thou art hungry?"

Swithin stared at his master, opened and shut his jaws, and, hugging himself, said, in a low grunt—"Could bark an oak."

"But thou hast heard," said Rupert, "the praise of thy good dame. The good word of honest people"——

"Should like an onion and some barley-bread," cried Swithin, and he smacked his lips.

"Nay," said Rupert, " "tell me, Swithin, how long dost think thou couldst live upon respect?"

Swithin chuckled, rubbed his sides with his elbows, and answered—"All the days of my life—with mutton."

"Peace, fool—peace!" cried Edith to the half-witted boy. "Husband, I will not hear this."

"Will the woman drive me mad? What's left us? Good words—respect!" shouted Rupert, and he looked wildly around him. He then hid his face in his hands, and walked rapidly to and fro. Then he paused, and, in a trembling voice, asked "How's the child?"

"Sleeps," cried Swithin, from the hut.

"Look, Edith—look!" cried Rupert; "he knows not if it be sleep or—or—"—and, with his back to the hut, his face haggard with dread, the father listened. "Will the woman never speak? Edith!"

"He sleeps soundly," said Edith.

"Soundly!" echoed Rupert, "soundly!"

"I see the poor man's angel at his head," said Swithin, staring at the child.

"The poor man's angel, boy!" said Edith. "What folly dost thou talk?"

"The poor man's angel," repeated Swithin, earnestly: "what other angel would come in weather such as this—in such a hole as this—with not a roof to cover him—not a crumb to lay in his platter? I have met angels in the forest; have talked to them; heard them call me from the trees: but then I was little—little as Stephen: I never see them now, and why? I've grown so old—so very old! 'Tis only when we're little things that angels play with us."

Rupert walked distractedly to and fro: then, pausing and meeting the looks of his wife, he exclaimed in a tone of helpless misery—"Edith—wife—what's to be done?"

"Thou hast entreated of him—begged of his worship"——

"I saw him not; I was chased like a dog from his gate: a vow was at my tongue—I almost swore a lasting warfare upon all."

"A good oath—a right good oath—had it been taken!" exclaimed a voice; and Edith, turning towards the speaker, scarcely suppressed a shriek as she recoiled from the glance of the intruder; he saw the terror, the loathing of the woman, and met it with a spirit of banter. "Why, my good dame, shall I never grow into your good graces? Humph! I have seen my

face in a stream, and, if I have seen better, truly I have seen worse."

"What seek you here?" asked Rupert of the stranger.

"So, so,—'tis true, then," said the visitor, staring at the roofless hut, the squalid wretchedness before him. "A pretty picture, i'faith—man's mercy towards man—a moving sight!"

"What seek you here?" again asked Rupert.

"You," replied the stranger.

"Hearken not to him," whispered Edith, who had crept close to her husband. "I sicken at his looks—tremble at his voice. Our misery is great, but take no aid from him."

"What says your honest woman?" asked the stranger. "I see—she likes not my face: well, well, we shall be better friends in good time."

"You have sought me. I am here—for the third time we have met. What would you with me?" and Rupert advanced to the stranger.

"I came in pity to you. I would not see a bold, brave man cast down, writhing under the iron heel of a ruthless world, and not stretch forth a hand to raise him. Listen to my counsel, and"——

"Do not, Rupert—for Heaven's sake, do not!" cried Edith.

"Ha! ha! we shall be better friends," repeated the stranger, with a confident laugh, and he nodded gaily at the woman.

"Peace, Edith—peace," said Rupert; then turning to the stranger—"if your purpose be an honest one, go on; if otherwise, leave me to my wretchedness."

"Honesty!" cried the stranger. "I knew a spiritless varlet of the name. For some black offence—(he had killed one of his lordship's bees, or plucked a stake from a hedge, or some such villany)—his roof was torn from his cabin, and he was left to blow his nails, and warm himself, his wife and child, with the glowing thought of his great goodness."

"Cold work, master—cold work," cried Swithin, from the hut.

"This same honesty found a friend, as you may find one; he took wise counsel, and became"——

"What?" asked Rupert, hastily.

"What all men would become—rich and powerful. Virtue reads prettily upon a tombstone, goodman Rupert, but 'tis a losing quality with bare walls and a quenched hearth."

"Husband," cried Edith, "listen not to him. There is temptation, horrible temptation, in his voice; his eyes are not as the eyes of other men."

"And you can bestow wealth?" asked Rupert of the stranger.

"I can give ye counsel that shall bear wealth. You hesitate? Poor wretched worm—poor, bloodless, abject thing!—whine, starve, and die!"

"Stay," cried Rupert, as the stranger turned to depart.

"Begone! speak not to him, Rupert!" and Edith clung to her husband.

"Strange man! there's something in your voice, your looks, that makes my heart quail, yet draws it to you. You can give me wealth?" cried Rupert; and the stranger smiled, and bowed his head.

"For what? What must he render in return?" exclaimed Edith, passing before her husband and confronting the stranger.

"He must promise in some things to obey me."

"Rupert," cried Edith, "*I* have obeyed you—in all things obeyed you—with a love that made obedience my best happiness. Oh, by that love—by the love that's mingled in our children, I do implore you—I pray for it as I would pray for your salvation—trust not that man;" and with these words Edith cast herself into the arms of Rupert, who, not venturing to meet the stranger's glance, in a loud voice bade him begone. The stranger, deigning no word in answer, disappeared in the forest.

"The angel's flown," cried Swithin, who still lay upon the earth watching the sleeping child; "the boy's awake!"

The cries of the child called the mother to the hut, and again stirred up the bitterness in the heart of Rupert. He looked around him for the stranger. "Gone!" he cried.

"'Tis not every day, goodman Rupert, that the fallow-deer puts his head in at the kitchen and offers his haunches to the cook," said Swithin. "Nobody will buy the poor innocent," he added, sighing.

"Wouldst sell thyself?" asked Rupert.

"Is't as cold as this," said Swithin, "at a hall-fire, with ale and a toast?"

"What! hast wit enough"——

"Enough—quite enough," answered Swithin, interrupting Rupert. "God help the folks that have too much! Goodman, dost think the ground of the hut is soft as a lord's bed? Thanks to the snow upon it, 'tis as white—that's something. Phew! cold's a cruel thing, master! Though I shall be a man some Michaelmas, I'd change my body and bones for the coat of an owl."

"Silence, and help me, as best we may, to keep out the night—for 'twill come," said Rupert. "We'll cut some boughs, and"——

"Here be the axes," said Swithin. "Ha! ha! and here comes the hardest piece of timber in the forest."

"Locust!" cried Rupert.

"His worship's man, or beast, or, what is worse," said Swithin, "the two in one."

Locust, followed by three men, presented himself before the hut.

"Not gone yet?" he cried, and frowned at Rupert; "what! dost rebel against his worship's orders? Wast not enough to kill his hound, the noblest beast that ever tracked its prey, but thou must linger here, braving thy lawful lord? Knowest not that he might have hung thee at his gate? Dost not answer me, thou sullen, savage knave?" cried the menial. "Tear down the hut! Nay, if thou wilt not budge when the roof be off, we'll burn the ruin to ashes."

"'Tis very cold," said Swithin; "bless thy worship—give us a fire!"

"Stand away, fool," cried Locust; and he raised his stick at the boy.

Swithin stared in Locust's face, then ran his finger along the axe, and chuckling, nodded at him, and said "She has a sharp edge, and why?—she was whetted on his worship's heart."

"So, so," said Locust, "we'll have the fool whipped out of ye, and then hang all the rogue that's left. Rupert, thou dost know his worship's orders? Thou must troop from the forest. Men, fire the hut."

Saying this, Locust advanced, but was seized by Rupert: both struggled, when Locust, breaking from the woodman, dealt him a heavy blow with his staff. Rupert snatched up an axe, and, in a moment, Locust, with his arm cleft to the bone, lay bleeding on the earth; his companions, seeing him wounded, fled in terror.

"What hast thou done, Rupert?" cried Edith—"murder!"

"'Tis red!" said Swithin, staring at the blood—"'tis red! ha! ha! who'd have thought it!"

"What's to be done?" exclaimed Rupert.

"I am here," said a voice; and Rupert again beheld the fearful stranger at his side. "Come."

"Go not with him, husband!" cried Edith.

"Stay then, Rupert," said the stranger, "and among these goodly trees choose thou thy gallows."

"Go on," raved Rupert frantically, "for good or evil—I can do no otherwise—I am yours!"

The stranger smiled, and beckoning, led the way into the depth of the forest.

CHAPTER III.

"A THOUSAND pieces of gold, good wife—a full thousand."

Such was the exulting cry of the Chevalier Belleville, as he flung the treasure on the table, and sank, wearied and overwrought, into a chair. "You hear wife? a thousand pieces."

The woman turned her wan, pale face to her husband, and, without a word, sighed deeply.

"Is't ever to be thus? Sighs, and groans, and lamentations, when fortune showers her bounty on us?"

"Fortune, Rupert!" and the wife sighed, and shuddered.

"Rupert! wilt never forget that cursed name?" exclaimed the husband.

"A cursed name! He was an honest man who owned it," said the woman, meekly.

"A drudge!—a miserable drudge! a fool, who licked the shoe that trod upon him; a simple wretch, who took the words—virtue, honesty, benevolence, as things of priceless worth. Ha! ha! what are they?—the counters with which the wise men of the world gull its fools and slaves!"

"God be merciful! Thou art changed indeed!" And the wife struggled with her tears.

"Ay, I thank my saint! I was a villain, crawling on the earth—a loathsome menial, almost breathing by the sufferance of his master. A hovel for my shelter—scraps for my food! What am I now?"

"Ask me not—ask me not!" And the woman, hiding her face in her hands, turned from her husband.

"It gladdens me to dwell upon the change. I am Chevalier Belleville, sought by the gay spirits of Paris—envied by the men, loved by the——Well, well, we'll pass that; but, in sooth, is not the Chevalier a prettier fellow than the Woodman?" asked the husband in a tone of heartless banter. "Ha! the dice cut surer than the axe. Here, wench, here's a trifle for thee!" And the Chevalier—for we purpose to call him so—threw a diamond bracelet into his wife's lap.

"Husband! whence came it?"

"Whence, Madame Belleville? Listen, girl! Fortune, when she bestows her gifts, is not to be too curiously catechised lest she withhold her bounty. Nay, Madame Belleville, let me clasp it on thine arm." And the Chevalier was about to fasten the bracelet.

"I would rather have an adder there," said the wife: and she cast the trinket from her.

"Well," replied the Chevalier, "there may be arms in Paris—ay, fond, white arms—for such a gift; yes, and lips to give sweet thanks for it."

"Rupert!"——

"Again!" exclaimed the husband, in a paroxysm of passion, glaring fiercely at his wife, who met his looks with a face of appealing sorrow—"My blood boils at the name! I am mad when thou dost speak it! I would forget it as I would forget some loathsome sickness."

"And I cling to it," replied the wife, "as a thing that takes me back to happier days—to hours of simple happiness—to a time of blessed peace!"

"If, Madame Belleville, my new fortunes displease ye, why follow them? There are convents, holy retreats, where wives, wearied of their cruel mates, may find repose. Why, I ask, follow my good fortune?"

"Because 'twill end in misery. Be sure of it, husband—'twill end in wretchedness, in death!"

"Amen! So ends the bravest history," said the Chevalier. "Come, no more of this: let us forget the misery that bowed us—the squalid wants that wore us—the brutish ignorance that made us hug our chains, and wrap our rags about us as our rightful livery. Our eyes are opened: we now may see what masks they are we took for real faces; we now may learn the heart of human life—now may laugh at the poor drudges while we use them. Ho! there,"—and the Chevalier again threw himself into a chair—"I am dry with preaching—ho! Narcisse!"

In answer to the summons appeared a youth, dressed in a handsome livery. He stood, rubbing his hands, and now eyeing his master, and now glancing at the bracelet that still glittered on the floor. The Chevalier, observing his looks, bade him pick up the trinket.

"Give it me. And now some wine, Narcisse—Burgundy," said the Chevalier.

"Ha! ha! the rich blood—the rich blood wine," and the servant chuckled, and, nodding familiarly at his master, quitted the apartment, and almost immediately returned with the liquor. The Chevalier, having emptied a goblet of wine, in a merry tone, and with looks often directed towards his wife, addressed the lacquey.

"So, boy—how are you called? By what name do men know you?"

The youth leered at his master, pouted a laugh, and answered "Narcisse."

"You never had any other name?" asked the Chevalier.

The servant affected an air of surprise at the query, then violently shook his head, and rapidly replied, "Never—never—ha! ha!—never."

"Always Narcisse?"

"Always Narcisse," answered the domestic, gravely.

"Where were you born, Narcisse?" asked the Chevalier.

"In Paris—no place less than Paris. Born in a duke's house—played with the duke's little babies—wore gold and scarlet years before I was weaned," replied Narcisse.

"What was your father?"

The youth put his hand to his brow—then looked sternly at his master, and answered "Ho! ho! so great! Turned king's spit."

"And your mother—and your brothers, and sisters, good Narcisse?"

"All—all great—all great, somehow—but all great."

"You have had friends, Narcisse—companions, playmates? Did you know one Swithin, a woodman's boy, an orphan, who lived in a forest?" questioned the Chevalier.

"Swithin?—forest?—hunted the boar once with the duke's sons—was that a wood?"—and Narcisse again leered at his master.

"You hear," said the Chevalier, glancing at his wife—"you hear, the fool has the best wisdom of the world, and forgets his baseness. He will not remember what he was—Swithin is dead—even to Narcisse, as he had never been. Wife, take counsel of the fool."

"Narcisse," said the wife, "tell me—you recollect Rupert, a woodman, who dwelt in a forest?"

Narcisse turned his blue eyes towards the face of his master, then answered with emphasis "No—no."

"Nay," continued the wife, "but you remember Edith? Yes—I am sure you remember Edith?"

"I had a dream once, and thought I saw an angel that was called so—a good, kind spirit—but when I awoke, I found—I found——" and the boy hesitated.

"What?" asked the wife.

"You, Madame," answered Narcisse, with his low chuckle.

"Go, sirrah," said the Chevalier, smiling at the wisdom of his lacquey.

"Go! Why do you linger?"

"There's a holiday—ha! ha! a holiday to-morrow," said Narcisse.

"What holiday?" asked the Chevalier.

"Hangman's holiday," answered Narcisse, quickly; "yet not so—not so; the hangman works to-morrow."

"What means the fool?" said the Chevalier.

"They hang a footman for loving his mistress, who loved him too.* Ha! ha! Should like to see a greater fool hanged than Narcisse. Bless you, kind master, may I see the sport?" And the eyes of Narcisse twinkled with anticipated enjoyment.

"I have an errand for you. Take this letter," and the Chevalier began to write, "to the Quai des Orfèvres. You know the place?"

"Gold, there—gold, bright gold," answered Narcisse.

"Give this letter to Aaron the Jew—mind, fellow, into his own hands, and at your best speed. Why do you loiter?" asked the Chevalier.

Narcisse chuckled, and, with an underlook at his master, said "And the hanging, Chevalier—the hanging?"

"You may see the sight," said the Chevalier; who added, with a laugh, "and, hark ye, Narcisse; see you profit by the moral of it."

"Moral—what is that? Ho! ho! I see—'tis a thing that grows upon the gallows. Acorns on oaks—mast on beech—and morals on the gibbet. Never fear, master—never fear—I'll pluck a handful;" so saying, the half-witted lacquey departed on his mission.

The Chevalier again looked at his gold heaped upon the table. "Yes," he cried, gazing upon the treasure, "if the shower last a month or two, there'll be enough to buy us a barony. We'll be noble, wife—right noble!"

Madame Belleville started from her seat—the Chevalier rose, touched by her passion. She approached her husband with streaming eyes. The Chevalier, after the pause of a moment, folded his arms, and, with a bitter smile on his lip, awaited her words. The woman gazed at her husband—his stonelike face smote her with despair. She turned from him, and exclaiming "God! God be with us!" hurried from the room.

Narcisse had lost no time on his errand, for he speedily returned from the Quai des Orfèvres, bringing with him the tradesman Jew.

"Aaron is here," said Narcisse. "I've seen his house Ho! ho! it is a heaven, master—a heaven—full of gold!"

Aaron was ushered to the presence of the Chevalier. He was a small, withered, sallow-faced old man, with a full, liquid

* See Bayle: Art. *Anchises*.

black eye, a hooked nose, and a pouch-like mouth. A thin white beard, and white lank hair, showed his many years. Fancy might have found in the spare, pinched person of the Jew, in the restlessness of his eye, and the grim smile wrinkling his lips, a resemblance to the haggard, active fairies, said to haunt the mines of Hungary for gold and gems.

"You sent for me, most noble sir," said Aaron, with his deferential smile.

"You buy and sell jewels, eh, Master Aaron?" asked the Chevalier.

"If not too costly, most noble sir—if within my humble means," answered the Jew.

"I have some diamonds, pretty things, I think; but I know the honesty of Aaron the Jew, and put myself at his disposal."

"The honour, most noble sir," said Aaron, with a profound reverence, "the honour of your trust is richer far than diamonds. For many years I have laboured for a good name; 'tis all I crave, sir—all I crave. With a grey beard, sir, what should I covet else?"

"True, Master Aaron," replied the Chevalier; "with white hairs, who would seek for worldly gains? Therefore, how many crowns for this?" And, as he spoke, the Chevalier suddenly laid the bracelet in the Jew's hand.

Aaron shrank in himself, and his quick eye dilated as the diamonds glittered upon it. He then gazed upon the jewels, and his heart glowed and rose within him, as he repeated—"how many crowns?"

"Ah, how many thousand? I see you are smitten with the trinket. They're of the real water, eh?" Aaron shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head. "Come, Jew, no huckster's tricks—'twill not serve with me. You were struck with the beauty of the stones—confess—hang your bargain with the devil, and be honest for once."

"I do confess I started when I saw the bracelet here," said Aaron, and he set his cunning eye upon the Chevalier.

"And why not here, dog?—why not here?" asked the Chevalier wrathfully, snatching the bracelet.

The Jew smiled, bowed, drew a chair, and seating himself, complacently rubbed his hands in each other, and, in an affected tone of wonder, said, as to himself, "By the prophets, who'd have thought it?"

"Hound! what's this?" exclaimed the Chevalier, stung by the mysterious manner of the Jew, "what Israelitish trick is this?"

"Take a chair, most noble sir," said Aaron; and the Chevalier, altogether disconcerted by the ease of his visitor, obeyed him. "A gentleman," said Aaron, familiarly touching the sleeve of the Chevalier, "a gentleman, with your standing in Paris, must know the noble family of Merival."

"I—to be sure—I—what then?" asked the Chevalier.

"They say that Claire de Merival is the most beautiful maid in France," said the Jew.

"So be it," cried the Chevalier, "what of that?"

"She is to be wife of Eugene de Loire—do you know that name?"

"The son of the Lord of Loire—the tyrant—the merciless tyrant of"——

"He is to marry the Lady Claire—all things are prepared. I think the day is fixed; nay," said the Jew, still gazing at the Chevalier, "I am sure the day is fixed."

"And why tell you this to me?" cried the Chevalier; "let them marry, and repent afterwards, what care I? Will you buy the diamonds?"

"Well, well, well—to be sure. Another glance at them, most noble sir," said the Jew; and the Chevalier, after a moment's hesitation, gave him the bracelet.

"Now, Jew, your old trick of trade; first abuse the stones, and then"——

"Not I, Chevalier: I find the diamonds of the right water—ay, excellent. We'll say a thousand crowns," said Aaron, surveying the jewels.

"A thousand—a thousand!" The Chevalier was breathless with passion.

"And yet I run a risk—a perilous risk," said Aaron.

"The risk of ruin, doubtless," said the Chevalier, mastering his temper. "A thousand crowns for—why, you jest, Jew, and I am in no mood for foolery. A thousand! They cost me three thousand!"

"Cost!" cried the Jew, staring at the Chevalier. "Noble sir, did you say cost? You bought them, then? Lack-a-day! Is it so? Bought them?"

"Bought them, or found them, or—or—or—what matters how I got them, to Aaron the Jew? Shall we deal?—will you buy?" asked the Chevalier.

Again Aaron fixed his smiling face upon the speaker, and in low, significant tones, said "A thousand crowns."

"Dog! Begone! — hence! — insatiate thief!" cried the Chevalier.

"Thief! Well, well, noble sir, you're merry to-day; to-

morrow, perhaps, you'll let me have it at my own price. Yes, yes, to-morrow. A thousand crowns to-morrow. Fare you well, sir, fare you well;" and the Jew, with his invincible smile, departed.

The Chevalier Belleville was aroused from the deep thought into which the words and manner of the Jew had plunged him by the announcement of a new visitor—"the Marquis de la Jonquille."

"He comes as I could wish!" exclaimed the Chevalier. "He shall explain this mystery."

"My dear Chevalier, I am dead with the vapours. Do—that's a kind creature—do give me a helping hand to save me from myself. By Jupiter! I'm as dull as an Englishman."

Thus spoke or drawled the Marquis de la Jonquille, a young, handsome man, dressed in the extreme fashion of the times. He threw himself upon a couch, and, fanning himself with his laced handkerchief, implored Belleville to bring him back to life. "Did you stay long last night, my dear Chevalier?" asked the Marquis, after some preparation for the further exertion of speech.

"Not long. Indeed, I came away almost immediately after you left," said Belleville.

"Ha! that jade fortune! *Ma foi!* Though I'm a philosopher, my dear Chevalier, still, when we see the shameful tricks the jade plays us men of wit in favour of a set of senseless wretches, it is enough to make us call the hussy foul names."

"Marquis," said the Chevalier, gravely, "do you know Mademoiselle de Merival?"

"The girl with floating blue eyes, and a throat like a column?" asked the Marquis de la Jonquille, carelessly.

"I have not seen the lady:—I hear that she is very beautiful."

"Yes, yes," cried the Marquis, "I know the thing, of course—what of her?"

"Last night," said the Chevalier, "you staked this diamond bracelet against three thousand crowns."

"And lost. That Jezabel Fortune! Well, you may say what the fellow writes upon the tombstones, *Hodie mihi, cras tibi.* You shall give me revenge. But what has Mademoiselle de Merival to do with the diamonds?"

"There you must instruct me; yes, Jonquille, must instruct me. I care not for such baubles; and, therefore, sought this morning to sell these to a Jew, one Aaron——"

"Of the Quai des Orfèvres," said the smiling Marquis. "A thin, lizard-looking Levite? I know the excellent merchant. Well! he offered——"

"A thousand crowns: but 'twas not alone the offer that startled me; 'twas his accusing look—his sharp, subtle tone—his smiling when I spurned him; and, more than all, his talk of Mademoiselle de Merival as he gazed upon the bracelet."

"Who knows? Perhaps the trinket was intended for the goddess," said the Marquis.

"Then how came it into your hands?—I must know this," cried the Chevalier.

"Fortune, my dear Chevalier, Fortune; that divinity has not always frowned upon me," answered De la Jonquille.

"You won the diamonds, then?" asked Belleville.

"The diamonds came into my hands," said the Marquis, who quickly added—"Have you heard the news? Harlequin is dead."

"Tut!" exclaimed the Chevalier.

"A national calamity. For my own part, I had rather we had lost three Marshals of France and half a score Generals. Great man, Dominique—a very great man; he threw, what I may call, a poetry about the profession of cheat. He made what the world calls roguery a decidedly fine thing."

"And so, Marquis, you really won these diamonds?" said Belleville, earnestly.

"Confound the diamonds! talk no more of them. I have already said they fell to me: they—they are what I call family jewels."

"Marquis, I must learn more of this. What do you mean by family jewels?" asked the Chevalier.

"Those diamonds, my dear Chevalier, that other people have about them," answered the Marquis.

"What can you mean?" cried Belleville.

"That Dominique will be a sad loss to me," observed the Marquis. "He brought great crowds to see him—very great crowds; and I—I love a crowd."

Belleville, bewildered by the laughing air, the evasive words of his visitor, looked vacantly upon him. De la Jonquille drew his chair closer to the Chevalier, and, laying a hand upon his shoulder, said, "Is it possible that so quick a wit cannot guess how I came by these diamonds?"

"Tell me—I entreat of you, tell me," cried Belleville.

"With the greatest pleasure, my dear Chevalier," was the ready answer of the Marquis, who instantly began his story. "Three nights ago I went to see the actors at the Hotel de Bourgogne—there was a great crowd—a delicious crowd. A young gentleman, as I afterwards discovered, one Eugene de Loire, was pressed close to me. At that moment, I assure you

upon my honour, my dear Chevalier, I was admiring the eyebrows of Hebé la Rose—a charming girl—I'll tell you more of her another time—and never felt more lazily inclined, when a something in De Loire's pocket struck me on the knuckles, and roused the sleeping genius within me.. You have heard me call those diamonds family jewels—I made them so immediately."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Belleville. "Made them so!"

"Mean? Ha! ha! Mean?" echoed the visitor.

"What? The—the diamonds were stolen?" cried the Chevalier, aghast.

The Marquis de la Jonquille threw himself back in his chair, and, in the midst of a lengthened yawn, made answer, "Decidedly stolen."

CHAPTER IV.

"And what—what if the Jew give notice of the robbery?" asked Belleville, almost stunned by the intelligence of the careless De la Jonquille. "What if Aaron denounce the thief?"

"Think not of it, my dear Chevalier," replied De la Jonquille; "the Jew is a man of honour. No, no—you have nought to fear."

"I—I fear!" exclaimed Belleville, looking fiercely at the immoveable Marquis; "let the felon tremble,—what have I to dread?"

"Alas! most spotless Chevalier," replied De la Jonquille, with affected compassion; "in this wicked, working-day world, purity even as bright as yours will be dimmed, be somewhat tarnished by the tainting breath of common rumour. Now, though I, his friend, believe the Chevalier Belleville to be of a most ancient honourable house, there are unbelieving dullards who may wish to know his quarterings: though I am well content to think him rich as the Mogul, the sordid folks in Paris may sometimes ask to see his ready money. Truly, now, may it not be so, thrice noble Chevalier?"

"Marquis!" cried Belleville, dwelling with significant emphasis on the word.

"Ha! ha! Confess—does not my Marquis sound as well as your Chevalier?—has it not as true a ring? Come, Belleville, let the meddling world if it choose play the herald with our titles, 'tis not for us to busy ourselves with such unprofitable

employment. To me, you shall be prince if you will; so, I pray you, let alone my humble marquisate." Saying this, De la Jonquille, rocking himself in his chair, stared confidently at Belleville, confounded by the assurance of his companion.

"I—I fear me, Marquis, that our tastes will henceforth unfit us for a communion that——"

"No, no," interrupted De la Jonquille, "never believe it. I perceive your delicacy; you shrink from the superiority of my accomplishments."

"I do, indeed," replied Belleville, sternly.

"Tut! the mere ignorance of modesty. Take the word of the Marquis de la Jonquille—ha! ha! a blooming title, is't not?—take his word, that you are in a fair way to eclipse even the brilliancy of his name. Oh, Chevalier!" and De la Jonquille gazed intently at Belleville, "you know not your powers—are even unconscious of your triumphs."

"Enough of this—enough, that I know and loathe your infamy—that I command you to be gone," cried Belleville.

"And the bracelet—the diamonds, Chevalier," said the unmoved Marquis; "will you keep the trinket, or shall I pay the crowns? Shall I——Madame Belleville!" and the Marquis bowed with his excelling grace as the matron entered the room. "Madame Belleville, you come at a most happy moment. Let me ask a lady's taste. We talked of diamonds, and——"

"I fear, sir," said Madame Belleville, coldly, "that I have seen the spoil you speak of—fear I know its history."

"Spoil is a harsh word from fair lips," replied the unabashed Marquis; "a cruel word; for, trust me, the Chevalier is the most punctilious player. I never knew a man bring such fine morality to the gaming-table: cardinals might learn of him."

"Another time for praise," most honourable Marquis, said Belleville; "should we meet again, I may have better leisure to listen to this eulogy."

"'Tis always thus with him, madame," cried the smiling De la Jonquille; "deaf ears to his own merits, and the promptest tongue for the virtues of his friends."

Belleville, almost maddened by the phlegmatic assurance of his visitor, was yet curbed by a lurking menace in his eyes. For a third time the Chevalier bowed, and glanced towards the door; and still the Marquis stood his ground, and smiled.

"Shall we meet to-night, Belleville?" asked De la Jonquille; "or, for one evening, do you play the hermit?"

"I have business," answered Belleville, drily; "business, it may be, of a delicate and serious import, with Eugene de Loire.

You know the gentleman—if my memory fail not, noble Marquis, I have heard you say as much."

"We have met," answered De la Jonquille, with composure, "but our meeting was so brief, and the crowd so great, I can hardly hope to linger in his memory."

"Oh! we have the means to bring you to his thoughts," said Belleville, and he fixed his eyes upon the tranquil cutpurse.

"And may I look for such service from the friendship of my best companion?" asked De la Jonquille; whilst Belleville turned his face from the keen, malignant glance of the inquirer. "Why so! I must rack my wit to find a due reward for such rare courtesy."

Edith, who had watched the threatening and significant looks of the two friends—for such they had hitherto declared themselves—sought to know of her husband the motive of De la Jonquille's sudden bitterness: whilst loathing him she trembled at his words. "What hasty speech had passed—what inadvertent thought escaped, to stir the temper of the Marquis?"

"A thousand pardons, gentle Madame Belleville," replied De la Jonquille. "I fear the ghastly sight that stopped me on my way—poor youth! a brave, hopeful, generous lad—has made me most unfit for company. Poor, murdered lad!" And De la Jonquille, calling up a look of sadness, crossed his arms, and sighed heavily.

"Humph! a sudden grief—let us hope not a fatal one: and yet, you spoke of murder, Marquis," said Belleville, sneeringly. "Was the victim a very valued friend, or a mere acquaintance, to be replaced at the next tavern?"

"Dear Madame Belleville," said De la Jonquille, deigning no reply to the irony of the Chevalier, "my poor young friend Antoine Laval——"

"Antoine Laval!" exclaimed Madame Belleville. "What of him? Oh! merciful Heaven!—Antoine——"

"Madame Belleville," observed the Chevalier, coldly, "I fear I lack a perfect knowledge of your many estimable friends."

"Speak, sir—speak!" cried Madame Belleville to the Marquis: "what of Antoine? Heed not my husband; he knows not the misery may come of this—knows not the youth——"

"Your pardon, Madame Belleville," answered De la Jonquille; "the Chevalier and the unhappy lad met but two nights since. Belleville," said the Marquis, "surely you remember the handsome stripling in the bloom-coloured satin—him who staked and lost with such emotion?"

"Antoine at a gaming-house! Antoine snared by the fiends at play?" cried Madame Belleville.

"I counselled him—warned him of his danger—his inexperience," said De la Jonquille; "but who can resist the Chevalier?"

"Rupert—husband! No, no, your soul is saved that sin! Changed as you are—debased, degraded by your hateful trade, you are yourself a father, and could not lure that noble youth to crime. If—if it be otherwise——"

"What then?" asked Belleville, and he glared fiercely at the agonised woman. "What if this Antoine Laval—if so he's called—played and lost his every crown—what's in it but good luck, since I'm the winner?"

"And yet the history of the poor lad, when known, may cause some idle talk among the tender-hearted folks of Paris. Who knows, Chevalier," said De la Jonquille, "that greedy, grumbling justice may not ask a restitution of your winnings? Hear the story. This Antoine Laval was the son—the only child—of a merchant's widow. At his father's death, his mother quitted Paris, and, with a small pittance, the produce of remaining merchandise, devoted herself to one only care—the education of her darling boy. He grew up a handsome, frank, ingenuous youth; and many, many were the days of future happiness hoped for by the widowed heart of the fond mother."

"So far a moving story," said Belleville, bitterly; "and, for that you are new at the trick of pathos, movingly told. Even Eugene de Loire might forget his losses, touched by the sympathetic strain of the Marquis De la Jonquille."

"Hear me out—hear out the tale; then, if you have lungs for the sport, crow your laughter. A twelvemonth since, the widow and her son returned to Paris. A friend of the dead merchant took the youth into his office, where every day his gentleness, intelligence, and cheerful habits obtained him praïse, advancement, and, in brief, a place of highest confidence. One night, urged by curiosity—he had seen no such haunt in Paris—he sought the tables. Whilst there, watching the games, fixed in his purpose *not to play*, a visitor accosted him; learned his history, his occupation, his command of wealth incalculable. You know that visitor, Chevalier—you know his subtle, elegant address, his fatal smile?"

Madame Belleville raised her eyes to the lowering, burning brow of her guilty husband, and reading there his infamy, buried her face in her hands and wept convulsively.

"Why do you pause?" asked Belleville. "Tell out your tale, good Marquis of the gibbet—most delicate Jonquille of the rope—out with it: I, too, have a history that, in good time, may follow."

The Marquis De la Jonquille smiled, gently elevated his eyebrows, and proceeded with his story:—"Again and again Antoine appeared at the tables. His friend advised, tempted; the young man staked; won—night after night he won—I saw his fortune—saw him doomed. Well, the story has the old ending: the run changed—the young man lost, and lost. He staked money not his own; it passed into your purse, Chevalier Belleville: and, ere you had sought your peaceful pillow, the miserable Antoine Laval—the poor, wretched, maddened dupe—had taken a leap in the dark." Saying this, the Marquis fixed his eyes on Belleville, and coldly smiled.

"Why—why do you preach this to me?" exclaimed the infuriated Belleville: "why, hypocrite, villain, cut-purse?"

"What besides? Nothing more?" asked De la Jonquille, and still he smiled. "Come, make my character complete for evil; call me companion, friend of the Chevalier Belleville."

"Miscreant!" shouted Belleville, and, drawing his rapier, he rushed upon the Marquis. "Miscreant! though I defraud the gallows, I'll——"

But, at this moment, Belleville's weapon, foiled by the easy mastery of his opponent, flew to a far end of the apartment, and, as it had been glass, broke as it fell. Belleville stared, wonder-struck, at the sleight.

"Fie, Belleville!" observed De la Jonquille, at the time placidly sheathing his weapon; "fie! you hold a rapier as 'twere a flail. Madame Belleville," and the Marquis bowed profoundly to the fainting, terrified woman, "I have the honour to take my leave."

"Villain!" cried Belleville, impotent with rage, "villain! we shall meet again."

"Certainly, most certainly," replied De la Jonquille, and, again smiling on the Chevalier, the robber Marquis walked leisurely from the apartment.

Belleville, with a mysterious feeling of mingled awe and hatred of his departed visitor, stood motionless, silent. No sound was heard in the apartment save the deep sobbings of his wretched wife, accusing him in bitterest accents of his guilt. He stood, humbled and degraded, not daring to meet a face which, for more than eighteen years, had shone with love upon him. He seemed to himself a felon arraigned at his hearth-stone.

"Edith—wife," cried Belleville, and his heart sank at the words; falling in a chair, he appeared awaiting his sentence. Awhile he sat in silence, then, starting from his seat, exclaimed imploringly, his voice breaking with the intensity of his passion —"Wife—wife—for the love of God,—speak to me!"

Ere all the words were uttered, Edith was in her husband's arms.

"So,—thou art still Edith," said Belleville, after some time venturing to meet his wife's eyes,—"still my wife. And yet, 'tis not the face—not the look of Edith. Why do you gaze so upon me? Why those frozen eyes—why that face of stone? Am I grown so hateful—hideous? Speak your thoughts, woman—I can almost see them," cried Belleville gloomily, his passion returning as he felt himself more and more alienated from the good, kind spirit of her who, though she could not but cling to it, could not but feel how wicked, worthless was the object of her woman's love. "Well," said Belleville, folding his arms, and drawing himself up to challenge the keenest glances of his wife, "well," he cried in laughing mockery, "what see you? What monster do you look upon? Truth, though of the bitterest,—I give you all honour, Madame Belleville—ever falls from your tongue; I can listen to it even now. What see you?"

"Ask me not—ask me not," cried Edith, "'tis too terrible to speak."

"Indeed! By Mercury, and all my other saints! you make me curious. Come, paint the picture, Madame Belleville."

"'Twill be in blood, then," answered Edith, and Rupert recoiled at the words—at the voice, for it was the voice of the accusing angel that uttered them. "In the blood of the fatherless—in the tears of the widow,—the widow wailing for her child. Oh, man! what fiend has snared you?"

"Fiend! the bugbear of a slavish mind—the fabled goblin of poor, weak fools, who take drudgery as their destiny, and dare not—for the jack-o'-lanthorn—break their chain or cast their load away. Am I to be startled by such jargon as gossips use?—Or shall I at once confess that I have made away my soul to our great enemy—that, under sign and seal, I am his future bondman?"

"No, husband, no. Well you say,—all such compacts between men and demons are but the fancies of a fabler's tale. 'Tis thoughts,—Rupert,—thoughts, that, hardening the heart to all the charities of life, make man a selfish hunter of his race—'tis thoughts, that, killing human sympathies, condemn the immortal soul. The fiends that lie in wait for us need no charm to raise them—no mystic word—no wizard's spell,—the wickedness of thought is power sufficient. How often to think evil is to call a devil up to act it!"

"Humph! Can it be?" asked Belleville, sneeringly. "Can so much danger be about us? The stars preserve poor, thinking man!"

"You deem me visionary, dreaming, Belleville," said Edith, and her eyes filled with tears. "Tell me," she cried, her voice deepening as she spoke, "when you thought to despoil Antoine Laval, if no imp of darkness were at hand, whetting a weapon for his breast?"

"Peace!" raved Belleville, his eyes flashing, "peace! or wilt make me mad? What know I of his death? 'Tis true, I won his gold—but won it fairly, openly. His fate is upon his own head."

Edith approached her husband, and extending her arms towards him—her form dilated,—her eye fixed,—her face, her attitude, that of a prophetess,—she spoke in thrilling tones,—"Upon your head, Rupert, upon yours! I look upon it, and I see no single hair that is not dyed with helpless blood—no spot of your face that is not stained with the life of a dupe."

"Devils!" exclaimed Belleville, and, in his madness, he rushed towards Edith, his hand grasping for his sword. Edith, unmoved by his frenzy, calmly pointed to the broken weapon on the floor: Belleville, abashed at his own desperate cowardice, awed by the stern tranquillity of the better nature before him, paused, and muttered, "Leave me—dost hear?—I would be alone."

"Impossible, Rupert," said Edith, "impossible."

"Am I not master here, madam?" asked Belleville, haughtily.

"Were you master of all Paris, Rupert, you could not now command the solitude of one poor hour."

"Ay?" asked Belleville, wonderingly.

"Even now, I see him by your side,—I see him, the companion of your future life," cried Edith, "the follower, for ever at your hand, until the grave shall open for you."

"Peace, and begone!" cried Belleville. "Does the woman see ghosts in broad day? You see *him*? Whom?"

"Antoine Laval," answered Edith. As she spoke, a shriek resounded through the house: Belleville started, and with white face, and in a voice tremulous with apprehension, asked—"was not that Marie?"

"Your daughter," answered Madame Belleville.

"What do I see?" exclaimed Belleville,—as a girl, with staring, vacant eyes, and smiles of latent madness, glided into the apartment. "It cannot be!" cried the father, and his trembling hands clasped his head, as he gazed upon the terrible face of the girl—a face of youthful beauty blighted by the looks of a maniac—"wife, wife, it cannot be!" cried Belleville in agony.—"Speak—that is—is——" and, incapable of further speech, he stood gasping, with his hand pointing towards the maiden.

Edith looked upon her child, and the brow of the mother was darkened for ever with the horrid truth. The parent neither raved, nor shed a tear, but, turning her face struck old with sudden misery upon her husband, she answered him in a voice of hollow whispering—"That is—I knew the truth but yesterday—that is the affianced bride of Antoine Laval."

At the words, Rupert fell as dead at the feet of his witless child.

CHAPTER V.

It was a dark, gusty night, when a man carefully wrapt in a cloak, and followed at a short distance by his armed lacquey, took his way to the house of Aaron the Jew, on the Quai des Orfèvres. Arrived at the door, the stranger looked warily about him, ere he knocked. After a brief pause, a voice from within inquired the business of the visitor. "I would speak with the Jew Aaron," was the answer. "He hears you now," said the Jew—"but to-morrow, sir,—to-morrow," said the goldsmith, and he was heard to retrace his steps, when a louder, more peremptory knocking, brought him back to the door. "Speak—what name?" asked the Jew. Again the stranger looked fearfully about him, then, bending his head, in a low, deep voice, answered, "Belleville—the Chevalier Belleville." At the words, a massive door-chain rang upon the floor—three bolts were undrawn, and the door slowly turning upon the hinge, Belleville saw the sharp meagre face of the Jew, who, shading a lamp with his hand, cast up his black, searching eyes full in the features of his visitor. "Chevalier Belleville, you come at a late hour, but you are welcome." Saying this the Jew led the way down a long passage, and turned into a little room at its extremity. Aaron, placing the lamp upon the table, rubbed his hands, and smiled with mixed complacency and cunning upon his visitor. "Well, Chevalier—well—I have looked for you these three days," said the Jew.

"Indeed!" answered Belleville, and he seemed to swell with hatred and contempt of the Hebrew, who, conscious of these feelings on the part of his visitor, met them with the very mockery of servility. What cared Aaron for the loathing of a profitable customer? He rubbed his hands, and bowed, and paid back with usury the scorn and hatred of the Christian gamester. "And you expected me?" asked Belleville.

"In truth, most noble sir,—I—Ha!"—and Aaron paused, and took the lamp from the table—"Ha! An old man! My head is going!"

"What now?" asked Belleville, laying his hand upon the Jew, who was hastening from the apartment. "What now?"

The Jew looked appealingly at Belleville, and tapping his own forehead with his thin, horny fingers, he sighed and repeated, "An old man—my head is going." Then, drawing himself closer to Belleville, he half-whispered confidentially, "I have forgotten the third bolt." With this communication, the Jew with new activity glided from the room, leaving Belleville in darkness: instinctively, the Chevalier laid his hand upon his sword. Did the Jew mean him foul play? No—no: he would gain more, thought Belleville—and the thought reassured him—by holding his peace. Had the Jew closed the door? Belleville stretched out his arm that he might follow him. The door was fast. He seemed as if in a trap. He groped round the walls, and, touching a piece of tapestry, felt that it drew aside. It covered another door. He opened it, and moving an inner curtain, stood astonished at the things before him.

He stood in a small chamber, lighted by four tapers, and in the midst a coffin. A white garment was hung over it, and in the coffin were scattered two or three handfuls of dry, dusty earth. On a panel in the wall, in letters of gold, were written these words:—

"*Aaron Ezra:—Let his soul be in the bundle of life, with the rest of the just. Amen! Amen!*"

The truth at once revealed itself to Belleville. The coffin had been prepared by order of the goldsmith—and, in the chamber, the old muckthrift, the seeming wretched, soulless man, was wont to familiarise his thoughts with the angel of death—to retire there from the traffic of the world to meditate upon the coming of eternity. He who seemed to have no heart, no thought, save for the lucre of this world—considered his coffin every night before he slept, and, in anticipation, laid himself within his grave!

For a moment the mind of Belleville quailed beneath the superiority of the Jew. He no longer thought of him as the subservient, slinking, smiling dealer, but as a man with faculties chastened, elevated by an awful discipline. "And yet—yet he clings to wealth," again thought Belleville—and, looking at the coffin, the epitaph, or whatever it was intended for, in the wall, the earth and shroud—the things appeared to him only as part of a grim farce, a mask, a mockery. With this new feeling the Chevalier stepped from the room, closed the door, and drew

the curtain, as the tread of Aaron was again heard in the passage.

"Your pardon—your pardon, noble sir—I had quite forgotten—my head! my head!—that I should have left you in darkness!" said Aaron; and placing the lamp upon the table, and slowly rubbing his palms, he intimated by his smile that he awaited the commands of his visitor.

"But wherefore bolt the door?" asked Belleville sternly, not deigning to attend to the invitation of the goldsmith.

"The door!" said Aaron, with a look of affected ignorance. Belleville doggedly repeated the question. "Alack! and so I did," cried the Jew. "Your pardon, gentle sir—I implore your pardon. Habit, sir—habit—forgive me—nothing more."

Belleville, eyeing the Jew askance, sought to gather from his impenetrable face an inkling of the mystery which, despite of all the Chevalier's efforts to despise, oppressed, confounded him. "I—I have bethought me of business that admits not of delay—I will be with you in the morning, Aaron," said Belleville; and, folding his cloak about him, he prepared to depart.

"At your own good time, Chevalier," said the Jew, readily taking the lamp to light his visitor to the door.

Again Belleville paused, and, struck by the alacrity of the goldsmith, and again despising his own fears, as he almost unconsciously measured himself against the slight, puny frame of the Jew, he took the trader by the hand, and with a gay, kind face, said, "But no, good Aaron—now I think on't—'tis better that youth, though enriched with most surpassing beauty, wait awhile, than that grey hairs be disturbed for a thriftless errand. We will talk now;" and with the words Belleville threw his cloak aside, and seated himself beside the grateful Jew. "And now, good Aaron," said Belleville, with a most conciliating smile, "you must pardon the hard, cruel words that, at our first meeting, I cast upon you."

"Hard words! I have forgotten everything, most noble sir," said Aaron, "everything, save that you sent for me to treat for certain goods. Why should I, an old and dying man, cherish the memory of wrongs?"

"True, true, Aaron. But how few, like yourself, let their passions, their resentments, die before them! How few see their vices coffined, ere they fall themselves!"

The eye of Aaron was set like the eye of a snake upon the face of Belleville, who, albeit he *felt* it on his cheek, avoided the gaze of the goldsmith, and was proceeding in his theme of praise, when the Jew, apparently relieved of his first suspicion, begged to be

spared all further eulogy, and, at the same time, prayed to know the commands of his most noble visitor.

"Time presses, worthy sir,—surely, you came hither for a wiser purpose than to flatter your poor servant?" said Aaron.

"'Twas not my errand, Aaron," said Belleville; "but I owed you some recompense for my late churlishness."

"I did not remember it:—your business, Sir," again gently pressed the goldsmith.

"Briefly then—you know one Eugene de Loire?" asked Belleville.

"A worthy gentleman—I have had dealings with him," answered the Jew.

"And he is betrothed to Claire de Merival?"

"A beautiful maiden—a lady of most rare sweetness— a——"

"Peace!" cried Belleville, contemptuously. "I have seen the damsel. Now, tell me, where can I find her boy-lover, Eugene de Loire?"

"At the door," answered the unmoved Jew, as a loud knocking proclaimed the arrival of a new visitor. Instantly Belleville leaped from his seat, and for a moment, like a tiger about to spring, crouched at the Jew, who with innocently-wondering face begged to know his worship's pleasure.

"This cunning will not serve you, Jew! Eugene de Loire here! What brings him to this house? Answer me, and quickly, Aaron, or there is a certain coffin in a near chamber, you understand me, that may be filled speedily with other goods than gold or spices. Speak! What brings him here?"

"I think, most noble Sir," replied the smiling Jew, "I think he comes touching a certain diamond bracelet. You hear his haste?" added the goldsmith, as the house rang with a second knocking.

"So, villain!" cried Belleville, "you have entrapped me. He stays, I doubt not, with a dozen officers. You have whistled the hounds, and——"

"What mean ye, worthy Sir? He seeks me for another jewel —he would replace the bracelet lost—had ordered me to supply it—to-night comes, with five thousand crowns, to require it at my hands."

"And where—where is the jewel?" asked Belleville. "Have you, most punctual trader, provided it?"

"I knew, most noble Chevalier, I might depend upon your coming—though, in sooth, I looked for the visit somewhat earlier. Now—you have it with you? The price we'll settle afterwards —come, 'twill be a rare trick to sell the youth the same bracelet a second time. How he'll praise the cunning of the

workman! Now, Chevalier, give me the treasure," cried the Jew.

"Miscreant!" exclaimed Belleville, and he grasped the Jew by the throat. As he held him, the knocking at the door was renewed—and louder and louder the summons sounded through the house, making Belleville deaf to the groans and gasping of the struggling Jew, and fixing the fingers of the assassin with mortal gripe in the neck of his victim. Every knock added to Belleville's sense of danger—nerved him anew to inexorable revenge. The wretched, puny goldsmith, writhed like a snake crushed in the iron hand of a Cyclops. The knocking ceased—the Jew no longer struggled.

"Who's there?" cried Belleville, as he heard the door of the room open, for in the death-struggle the lamp, thrown from the table, had been extinguished. "Who's there?"

"Eh? that fell heavier than an autumn leaf," was the answer, as the corpse of the Jew tumbled in a heap upon the floor, and the cold, measured, passionless tone of the unseen speaker seemed to freeze the marrow of the assassin.

"Who's there?" again gasped Belleville, and he shuddered at the hollowness of his own voice—was appalled at the beating of his own heart.

"Do grey hairs drop so heavily?" questioned the stranger mockingly.

"Speak! Who are you?" exclaimed Belleville. "Man or fiend, I fear you not! Speak!"

"Ha! ha! His heart beats like the bell of Notre Dame," cried the voice, "but not with fear. The tiger that laps blood grows bold."

Belleville, drawing his sword, plunged it madly towards the speaker; the weapon stuck in the panel of the door, and at the same time a low derisive whistle sounded through the apartment.

"Better fortune the next throw," said the voice, and immediately Belleville heard a low sound of shaking dice. The sweat poured down his face—his voice died in his throat—he staggered—and fell upon a chair; and, as the dice continued to sound, his brain grew stunned with what seemed to him infernal music. He sat, tongue-tied, in the darkness, and still the things that slew the widow's son sounded. To Belleville's imagination there was an audible chuckle, as of the fiends, in the quick rattling of the dice.

"So—sixes again!" cried the unseen dicer. "Now, Monsieur Laval."

At the name, Belleville sprang in horror to his feet—a recol-

lection of the inner chamber flashed upon him. In a moment he had torn aside the curtain, and dashed open the door. The tapers, burning by the coffin, threw a dim, sickly light into the room, revealing to the amazed Belleville the body of his victim, now a tenant for the grave. Rupert reeled, heart-sick, against the wall:—he was alone with the dead! He could have faced the fiend himself—but the solitude—the silence appalled him. The knocking, again commenced at the outer door, though it announced a host of enemies, in that horrid moment relieved him, for it again connected him with human sympathies—again made him a part of human life. He was gasping in a circle drawn by demons, when the hand of man plucked him thence.

"So, executioner and sexton too!" cried the Marquis de la Jonquille, who had opened the door, and stood with laughing face, his eyes wandering from the dead to the types of death.

"Jonquille! what juggling's this?" exclaimed Belleville.

"Juggling!" echoed the Marquis, and he pointed to the body of the Jew; "my best of friends, this is the end of juggling—though I must say it, the only end; for at the very gates of the churchyard the mountebank sets up his scaffold—'tis but when he is thus, his trade is really done."

"You were here but now," cried Belleville—"deny it not. Here—here—with dice."

"Fie, Chevalier, fie! Dice! and in such solemn company?" and De la Jonquille bowed reverently to the dead. "Surely—surely, I know the relics of my betters; ay, betters—for the carcass of your dead beggar may be the cast garment of an angel."

"Cease this jargon—cease."

"Right: 'tis dull and heavy, and begets black blood in us. Surely it is the smell of mortality that breeds these megrims, turning a fine and lively gentleman—for such I dare call myself—to a sad, sardonic proser. There's nothing like the malaria of the grave to breed a tedious moralist. I have done. Pretty work, i'faith!" cried, or rather crowed the Marquis, who, with crossed arms, and rising airily upon his toes, looked down upon the murdered Jew. "Brave work!"

Belleville, harassed, mocked by his thoughts, tortured by his fears, gazed, yet gazed in vain, at his vivacious comrade: armed in invulnerable self-possession, no look, no movement escaped him that should serve to reveal more than he cared to confess. Imploringly, yet hopelessly, Belleville for the last time appealed to him. "And this is no trick, De la Jonquille—tell me—I implore you—dear—dear Marquis?"

"Ha!" cried the newly restored friend, and, gracefully

approaching Belleville, he pressed him in his arms, exclaiming, "Excellent Chevalier!"

"You were not here?" cried Belleville, breaking from his embrace.

"Dear Belleville, you have studied hard of late, and the overworked brain falls into waking dreams—'twas my own case once at college. You have pondered too much on the combinations of play; and, did the lark herself sing in heaven, you'd think it was the dice-box rattling upon earth. You need recreation—the distraction of new pleasures—perhaps a little blood-letting; though," and here the Marquis glanced at the dead, "though that may come unsought."

"And how—how came you here? was it you who knocked?" cried the Chevalier.

"That you shall know—at present there are graver things to think of," answered the Marquis. "Humph! poor old man! Yes," and De la Jonquille tapped his snuff-box, and fed either nostril, as he considered the blackened face of the murdered Aaron: "plain enough — apoplexy, poor man! — apoplexy." Belleville shrunk within himself at the mocking voice of his companion, who still proceeded. "I thought 'twould come to this—he was ever so full and fat with gold. Ay—apoplexy."

"Jonquille—what's to be done?" cried Belleville, passionately.

"The good, religious man," answered the Marquis, as he stepped into the inner chamber, and taking a taper surveyed the various apartments of the house of death, for so it might be called—"hath shown a pious, provident nature. Here are all things fitting his changed condition. So," and De la Jonquille took a handful of earth from inside the coffin, and let it run from between his fingers back again, "Jerusalem soil, and of the finest."

"We lose time," said Belleville; "answer, what's to be done?"

"Jerusalem earth," cried De la Jonquille, his fingers still playing with the dust. "To think now, Belleville, that our dead friend there—that he whose every pulse seemed to beat for crowns—that he who would suck men's hearts for gold—that he who would lie, and fawn, and cringe—I crave his pardon to speak such hard truths in his dead presence—that he who seemed to have fallen as far from man as man fell from Paradise—should carry in his breast fond yearning thoughts for the glories of departed days—that foul, begrimed with the filth of Paris, he should dream of the waters of Jordan—that, scorned, insulted, laughed at, spit upon, he should see his dearest hopes blossom

and bear immortal fruit in this the dry dust of his old Jerusalem."

"Jonquille!" exclaimed the Chevalier, "of what avails this strange, wild preaching?"

"This much, did it suit either you or me to profit by it:—to look on no man, be he the lowest, basest, but as one who, it may be, carries within him some portion of that mystery of mysteries which sheds upon his solitary thoughts ennobling light, effulgence wonderful—that makes him, a beggar clad in rags, sometimes the humble, hopeful guest of angels."

"What means this talk? Is't Jonquille, or is it——"

"It was my other self that spoke just now," said De la Jonquille, assuming his usual manner; "all men are double, though the world sees but one man in one—nay, the man himself shall often walk fourscore years and more about this dreaming world, and die ignorant to the last of his twin-brother. My rhapsody is done, Belleville," cried the Marquis; "I have not prated at this pace this many a day—should not have ventured now, but that I know the prattle will be pardoned, as *'twill be forgotten.* Now, to business, my brave Chevalier. Come, lift here the body."

Belleville shrank, and shuddered at the words. "Not for the wealth of Paris," said he, "could I touch it."

"Pshaw! Your fingers have touched the living Jew—he hath not been dead so long that you should be thus squeamish," said Jonquille. "Come, I'll help you lift this worn-out thing to bed;" and Jonquille, taking the body by the shoulders, awaited the assistance of the reluctant Belleville. "Come, man; or, if you scorn to bear the legs, perhaps, you'll put your hands to his neck." Belleville cast a fierce look at the laughing Jonquille, whose head, bent over the face of the corpse, was, in its heartless mirth, in horrid contrast with the livid features beneath it. Handsome as he was, the Marquis in his ill-timed laughter looked little better than a ghoul stooping above its loathsome prey. "Belleville," again urged Jonquille.

Belleville, nerving himself for the task, averting his head from the accusing face of his victim, laid his trembling hands upon the body, when a loud knocking was heard at the door. Belleville started up with an exclamation of horror.

"Well, then," said De la Jonquille, unmoved by the sound, "it seems I must do this handiwork myself;" and the Marquis carried the body, as it had been the body of an infant, into the inner room.

CHAPTER VI.

"OPEN the door," cried Jonquille from the chamber, as the clamour was continued in the street.

"Are you mad?" raved Belleville. "Know you who it is?"

"I know," answered the Marquis, stepping from the chamber, and taking the lamp, "that the watch will be raised with this infernal summons—that the door may be burst in, and that in yon nook, a silent, though most sufficient witness may be found against us."

With these words De la Jonquille quitted the room, and proceeded to unbolt the street-door, leaving Belleville terrified at his rashness, yet somewhat sustained by the confident air, the easy mastery of circumstance, displayed by his companion. Belleville felt that for all future time De la Jonquille was essential to him—that there was a power, a fascination in his manner, which it was in vain to resist—a knowledge to which he must bow down—an experience of the world by which the surest advantages might be obtained. Their fates were henceforth bound together!

The new danger that pressed upon him had wholly banished from the mind of Belleville his first wondering thoughts—still unsatisfied—at the mysterious appearance of De la Jonquille. They again possessed him, and were again banished by the sound of footsteps in the passage.

"The worthy master Ezra lies perilously sick," said De la Jonquille to a stranger, as he courteously lighted him into the room. "But this gentleman, sir," and the Marquis bowed towards Belleville, "is a most dear friend of the worthy Aaron, is possessed of the secret of all his dealings, and I doubt not can satisfy you."

"Can I not see the Jew?" asked the stranger.

"He lies in the next room, sir—ill, very ill," said De la Jonquille.

"'Tis somewhat strange," remarked the visitor—"somewhat sudden. Within this hour I had a message from him."

"Indeed!" cried De la Jonquille. "Then, doubtless, sir, he may be brought to give you his company. Within an hour! But then, alas! he was fitter for society. What name shall we carry, sir?" asked the smiling Marquis—"What name?"

"Say the Count de Loire," answered the stranger, and Belleville gasped at the words.

De la Jonquille turned towards the Chevalier, and, in the softest tones, in a voice pitched, as it were, to the weariness of a sick ear, said, "You hear, my friend, De Loire—say so to the worthy Aaron." The face of Belleville became ashy pale, and his limbs shook, as De la Jonquille made his placid request, and cast his eyes in the direction of the death-chamber. He sat palsied with dread. De la Jonquille, to engross the attention of the visitor, immediately proceeded. "I think, sir, I can divine your business: the poor, sick man and we have had some conference on it. Is it not—I ask, that, should I guess aright, we may despatch the matter straight—is it not touching a trinket—a——"

"A diamond bracelet," answered the stranger. "I made a purchase of the Jew of such a valuable, but——"

"I heard of your mischance, sir," quickly observed De la Jonquille; "you lost—mislaid it."

"Stolen by some thief, I doubt not," answered De la Loire, gravely.

"Alack, sir, very like—very like," was the opinion of the Marquis. "Did you give no notice of the robbery?"

"No: I had my reasons—family reasons—that my loss should not be known. Aaron has done wrong to speak of it," said De Loire.

"We are his friends, sir—his trading friends. I know of your misfortune, but, trust me, would be the last to publish it. And yet, sir, 'tis to be deplored that your necessity for secresy should serve the rogue who picked your pocket," remarked the ingenious De la Jonquille.

"Oh, sir, fear not," replied young De Loire, "the knave escapes but for a time—the galleys or the gibbet is sure to end him."

"Let us hope so," exclaimed De la Jonquille, with fervour—"let us devoutly hope so. And now, sir, for business."

"Ask Aaron if the bracelet be ready—the bracelet fashioned like the one——"

"You lost?" interrupted De la Jonquille. "I'll see him instantly." The Marquis rose, and was about to pass into the next chamber, when he paused, and turned to the dreaming Belleville. "Why, man—why so sad? All will be well yet, depend on't. My worthy friend, sir," said De la Jonquille, leaning familiarly upon the shoulder of Belleville, "is at this moment far at sea. He hath two ships of which no tidings have been heard, though news hath this month and more been looked

for. What then, sir? Hope is the merchant's goddess. But for the bracelet, sir, I fear me Aaron is too sick to speak to you himself—though, it may be," and to the consternation of Belleville the Marquis half-opened the door, and stood inviting the presence of the stranger, "it may be you would wish to say some words to him."

"What is his malady?" asked young De Loire, rising and advancing to the chamber.

"A fever," answered De la Jonquille, carelessly, and the youth paused; "but of the commonest kind, though a fever that in these few thousand years hath taken off who shall say how many? Will you see our friend?"

"No matter," answered De Loire. "Tell him I am here, and wait the fulfilment of his commission."

De la Jonquille entered the chamber—closed the door. It was his diseased, his tortured fancy—but Belleville, as he sat and listened, was assured that he heard low mutterings—now the hoarse voice of the Jew, and now the clearer tones of De la Jonquille. Could it be possible? Had the Jew but swooned? Was he really alive? As these wild thoughts darted like fire through the brain of Belleville, the Marquis opened the chamber door, and, with his customary smile, bowed to De Loire, saying "All is well, sir. A moment—your pardon:" he then crossed to the door leading into the passage. "What ho! there!" called De la Jonquille, and instantly a man obeyed the summons.

"Narcisse!" cried the astonished Belleville, as he saw his half-witted lacquey sidle into the room.

"You are wanted in the sick chamber. I charge ye, boy, be zealous and obedient," said De la Jonquille, taking no heed of the surprise of Belleville; and Narcisse, stealing a sidelong, cunning look at his master, and his lips puckered with a smile more terrible than any scowl, entered the room of the dead. "A strange, wild creature, sir," said De la Jonquille to De Loire, "but faithful as a hound."

"How fares the Jew?" asked De Loire. "He will, I trust, recover?"

"Never doubt it, sir—never doubt it. And now," and De la Jonquille sat himself opposite the noble youth, and, with the air of a man assured of deserved eulogy for some rare achievement, looked confidently in the face of De Loire. "And now, sir, your praise—ay, your wonder—for the cunning of our workmen. You desired the bracelet to be fashioned as closely like the one you have lost—may the hangman clip his fingers who filched it!—as art could make it. Look there, most noble sir;" and Jonquille laid the trinket on the table.

"Like, indeed!" exclaimed De Loire, his eyes devouring the bracelet: "most like."

"You could almost swear it was the very article you lost," said De la Jonquille. "Look, sir——"

"Ha!" cried Belleville, and then, recovering himself, he said, "I—it is nothing—but I thought I heard our sick friend—I——"

"The boy will attend to him, fear not," said De la Jonquille, who again addressed himself to De Loire: "you must admit, sir, that the art that could compass so rare a similitude——"

"Cold—cold—cold!" cried Narcisse from the inner chamber, and Belleville trembled for the safety of their horrid secret.

"'Tis very like," said de Loire; "almost impossible to know it from the bracelet lost. You know the workmen?"

"The most cunning tradesmen in Paris," answered De la Jonquille; "but their handiwork speaks for them."

"And they are honest, worthy men, no doubt? Men of well-tried probity, with no suspected comrades?" asked De Loire.

"Think you, most noble sir, that Aaron Ezra, the goldsmith of Paris—the man whose word is worth a million——"

"Dumb—dumb—dumb!" muttered Narcisse; "dumb as fish!"

"Pardon me, sir," said De Loire; "I would not tarnish with one suspicious word the white fame, the honest worth, of even your Paris rag-picker; it is, perhaps, the destiny of wonder-working genius to have its triumphs set down to unlawful practices: the greatest wits have suffered by such wrong. Now, that this bracelet should be—but, as you have said, sir, the cunning of some artists is almost miraculous."

"It was, sir, the hope of Master Ezra to satisfy so noble a patron. Will you take the trinket with you?" asked De la Jonquille, as the young nobleman put the bracelet in his bosom. "Shall we not send it to your hotel?"

"No matter—I will myself be the bearer," answered De Loire.

"Alack, sir! consider—should you lose it like its fellow!" said De la Jonquille.

"The cunning of your workmen," replied De Loire, airily, "can doubtless furnish me with a third. Stay, the sum is five thousand crowns. Here is the money," and De Loire laid a bag of gold upon the table, and rose.

"Stay, most noble sir," said de la Jonquille; "you need the signature of our sick friend." With this, the Marquis was about to enter the adjoining chamber, when he paused. "And yet, sir, 'twere best you saw the goldsmith write. I pray you, enter."

A moment De Loire hesitated, then, to the horror of Belleville,

passed into the room. Instantly De la Jonquille, seizing the money, darted into the passage, beckoning Belleville to follow him. Another moment, and the two friends stood on the Quai des Orfèvres.

"This way," cried De la Jonquille: "fear not, we have time to spare; Narcisse will entertain our customer. And see, should we meet with another diamond-seeker, we have still stock to trade with. Look!" and De la Jonquille dazzled the wondering eyes of Belleville with the bracelet, again filched from the bosom of its purchaser.

CHAPTER VII.

"Ho! ho! in the name of the sick man, welcome," cried Narcisse, as De Loire entered the chamber of the dead, and looked around, but looked in vain, for the Jew.

"Fellow, where is master Ezra?" asked De Loire; and Narcisse, with a shrug and a laugh, raised his finger towards the ceiling, then bent it to the floor, and answered—"Ha! ha! who knows—who knows?" Immediately, De Loire turned from the room, to seek the Chevalier and De la Jonquille; they were gone. Again turning towards the inner chamber, he found Narcisse at the entrance, prepared, as it seemed, to prevent his returning thither.

"Where is your master, knave?" inquired De Loire.

"This way,—hush!" said Narcisse, and he moved towards the door that opened into the passage; then paused, and, looking around him, seemed by his face and manner about to communicate some secret intelligence to De Loire; who, put altogether off his guard by the cunning of the simpleton, passively awaited his communication. With a rapidity of motion at once startling and confounding his dupe, Narcisse seemed to vanish from the room and close the door upon his victim. He then flew along the passage, and, opening the street-door, bounded with a chuckle of delight and triumph across the threshold. Poor Narcisse! He fairly leapt into the arms of the myrmidons of justice, who, as it appeared, with instinctive nose, had snuffed the wrong but lately done upon the person of the Jew, and awaited at the dead man's door the exit of the criminal. Such, at the time, seemed the wonderful sagacity of the police; though, as appeared from later discoveries, they had, in truth, but little claim to that unerring faculty.

"Bah! how the knave smells of blood," cried Pierre Grognon, an officer, whose discrimination in such delicate matters had been many a time triumphantly tested. "Ha! another job for Jacques Tenebræ," he added, giving utterance to a name at which the boldest rogue in Paris quailed and was silent. "Well, my friend, let us look at your handiwork;" and instantly Pierre, with half-a-dozen of his followers, entered the house, leaving Narcisse in the safe custody of some of his men without.

No sooner had De Loire recovered from his surprise at the sudden departure of Narcisse, than, instead of following him, he felt himself dragged back by an invincible curiosity to the inner chamber. He looked around him, and saw a coffin placed on end in a corner, and in an opposite nook a heap of something covered with a sheet. Stooping forward with beating heart, and with an indefinable feeling of dread, he snatched away the cloth, and beheld the huddled corpse of the Jew. He stood horror-stricken at the hideous, the awful sight. At the same moment, Pierre Grognon, putting aside the tapestry-curtain thrust his huge head into the chamber, saying, with all his characteristic phlegm, "Sir, your good friends wait for you."

De Loire, recognising the features of the man of office, exclaimed—"Grognon! Is't you?—thank God!"

"Civilly spoken, sir, and like a gentleman," answered Grognon. "The man of true breeding never forgets himself, as my good friend Jacques Tenebræ says, whether at the wheel or on the gallows. Humph! Poor Aaron Ezra! Surely, if any bit of the devil be in our faces, death brings it out with a vengeance!" and Pierre leered with mixed disgust and contempt at the body of the Jew.

"Now, sir," said Pierre, with smiling courtesy, "we are ready to attend you. Saul, Tripot, Longuemain," and the officer spoke to his followers—"stay you here and possess the house—I'll bring ye further orders. Now, sir;" and Grognon waved De Loire from the room.

"I—what is—Grognon—the villains who have doubtless done this," stammered De Loire.

"We have two of them," answered Grognon; "two, sir."

"'Tis well;—but there was one—a seeming fool—a subtle, simple accessary—"

"He is one of the prisoners," said Pierre.

"One! But have you not the villains who——"

"We have already two, sir,—two. If, in the benevolence of your nature," and this time the officer fairly grinned, "you are disposed to peach——"

"Peach!" exclaimed De Loire; for his indignation left him no more words.

"Well, sir, well," observed Grognon, mistaking the passion of his prisoner, "your pardon—I did not, understand me, accuse you of so mean a disposition. No—no; I honour virtue even in the murderer of a money-lender."

"Is it possible," cried De Loire, aghast at the thought that for the first time presented itself—"is it possible that—do you not know me?"

"I lack that distinction," answered Grognon.

"Fellow, I am the Count de Loire;" and the young man, summoning his proudest look, stepped forward, and was about to pass the officer.

"I am sorry for it," answered Grognon, "sorry and glad, my lord; for, had you killed a brother nobleman,—but, I crave your pardon, your lordship's private inclinations are not for my humility to question; I am only here to attend you."

"Whither?" asked De Loire, his frame quivering with suppressed rage.

"To the place of justice—there you may tell your tale, my lord; and it is the honest prayer of the simple Pierre Grognon, that you tell it to believing ears. Forward."

De Loire, deigning noreply to the impertinent sympathy of the menial, stepped into the place left for him between his guards, and, burning with anger, amazed, confounded, and thinking all about him a miserable dream, walked forward, and in an instant passed the door. He was received with a shout of triumph by the mob gathered on the Quai, who all pressed to look upon him, whilst many Jews, drawn by the tidings of their brother's fate to the door, struggled through the crowd, and called down fiercest curses on the murderer.

"Carry that home with ye, pig-hating unbeliever!" exclaimed Pierre Grognon, as seizing a halberd from one of his men, he felled a wretched Hebrew to the ground, one of the twenty who raved and howled, and shook their fists at the prisoner. "Is't so rare a sight to see a gentleman in trouble, that ye all make this devil's holiday? Pluck their beards from their dogs' chins, the unclean heretics!" cried the captain of the band; and the Jews, awed by his voice, slunk back, and muttered their maledictions. "A thousand pardons, noble sir," said Pierre to his prisoner, "for the incivilities of the rabble. Poor things! 'tis not every day they see a Count in our society. A few minutes, sir, and we are at home." The crowd increased by the way, and ere De Loire had reached the place of justice, a vast multitude surrounded him, some of them asking his guilt, and some in

reply heaping upon his head unnumbered crimes. At length the procession arrived at its destination.

"Look, man, look—how his Countship flusters and swells," said a man wrapt in a cloak and raised upon the topmost of a flight of steps, but a few paces from the hall of justice. "Is't the flare of the torches on his cheek, or is it the natural colour of an assassin? Look!"

"I cannot see him," replied his companion, muffled like the first speaker. "Let us go."

"Not for the world!" and Dė la Jonquille—for it was the airy, philosophic, bitter-speaking Marquis—held fast his friend and his victim, Belleville: "not for the world. This is a brave sight to witness!"

"A brave sight!" echoed Belleville, faintly.

"Ay: the strugglings of innocence—the fight of conscious truth against the deadly grasp, the silent, killing power of circumstance. Is't not a glorious combat? Though, to speak truly, the odds are terrible. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Why—why do you laugh?" cried the Chevalier, and he shuddered as he spoke.

"Why? To think, my dear Belleville, what a pretty painting of the world in little—that is, of much of this great world—is now presented in the culprit there, in the crowd, and, my excellent friend, in yourself. There is helpless innocence, damned by appearance, hauled through the mire, beset by ribald laughter, scorn, and curses; and there it goes, with its pure heart, it may be, first to the wheel, and next to the gibbet, dying for the great example of all living rogues. So does circumstance judge and execute! And here are you, the true assassin——My dear fellow," cried De la Jonquille, in a tone of remonstrance, feeling Belleville start at his side—"my best and dearest friend, give not thus in to the common weakness that, as it becomes familiar with the *thing*, affects the greater abhorrence of the *word*. Leave such unworthy affectation to those elect of the earth, who by virtue of their offices are white, milk-white—when, by the want of every other virtue, they are, to speak mincingly, a little clouded. Scorn such moral coxcombry, and let your ears be as dauntless as your hand. There—the Count has passed into the hall! and here stand you, the true assassin, with your nails yet warm with your victim's flesh—— "

"Jonquille!" exclaimed Belleville, in an imploring tone, wholly lost upon the Marquis, for he deliberately repeated the words.

"With your nails yet warm with your victim's flesh, muffled smugly up, gazing on the hapless wretch, condemned to suffer for

your villany—I use, my worthy friend, the vulgar language of the vulgar world—condemned to suffer for your villany; you dwelling and glittering among men, a fine, a joyous gentleman, a rare companion, a most conscientious knave. Is it not so, my noble Chevalier?" asked De la Jonquille with his terrible smile.

"Why, and at such a time, dwell upon it?" cried Belleville gloomily. "Come, let us hence."

"Ay, you would go to supper. Faith! I'm hungry, too; yet, curiosity, my dear friend, is stronger than appetite: let us first witness the meeting of the Count de Loire and the judge, and then, have with ye. Tut! 'tis a pity that poor rascal Narcisse will be cooped too."

"He must be saved. My friend—my dear De la Jonquille," cried Belleville with emotion—"he must be saved."

"I have a younger brother at the bar, a most promising spirit—with a brow of brass, and a tongue of silver—he shall plead for him," said the Marquis in the tone of a man who has said sufficient.

"Plead for him! What pleading can rescue him from the evidence? My counsellor and friend—think of some other means," said Belleville earnestly.

"Ha! I have it; *fiat justitia*—how runs the gibberish? Justice shall be done; and Narcisse, your poor, simple boy, simple in his dog-like honesty, may yet be saved. I see it."

"My genius—my better star," cried Belleville; "tell me the means."

"Willingly; attend." And the Chevalier bent his earnest looks on the face of De la Jonquille, gazing upon him as a penitent gazes upon his confessor. "Thus it is, then—do you mark me. You would have Narcisse free; I cannot blame the weakness; he is the prince of valets—tracks a lady or a prodigal like a bloodhound; such virtues should neither expire on the scaffold, nor toil at the galleys. You may, and with a word, ay, this instant, save him."

"How—how?" cried the impatient Chevalier.

"Was there ever such dulness?" cried De la Jonquille, drawing a little back, and with affected wonder, staring at Belleville. "Can you not perceive the means?"

"I *am* dull—I do not," answered Belleville.

"It seems, then, I must speak out. Do you not perceive, my excellent, yet all too simple Chevalier, that, as it was yourself who throttled the Jew, you have only to confess the indiscretion, and take my word for it, your valet, your faithful boy, is preserved."

The blood suddenly burned in Belleville's face ; he bit his lip, and, without a word, turned from his adviser.

"At all events," continued De la Jonquille, who would not perceive the effect of his counsel, "at all events, 'tis worth the trial. Nay, I am willing to risk my head—more, my honour—on the glad result. You do not speak? I see it—you are thunderstruck that such simple, such ready means of preservation should not have entered *your* brain? It is strange ; but there are certain thoughts which, though affecting our most vital interests, rarely originate with ourselves. We owe them too often to the teeming minds of our best friends, our worthiest acquaintance. What say you to my proposal ? "

"Let us first seek some other means," answered Belleville doggedly.

"Right—very right ; and, all others failing, 'twill then be time enough to tell the simple truth, and die yourself. I perceive that in some things you are more provident than I, your friend. Now, let us to the hearing : " and the Marquis made his way towards the hall.

"No—no—I will wait for you at the hotel," cried Belleville, and he sought to slip away, when De la Jonquille seized him by the arm, and, by his manner, rather than by his strength, forced the Chevalier into the Hall of Justice.

"Why this hurry ?" asked the Marquis, as he jostled through the crowd ; "after the murderers have been fairly heard we'll hence to supper." He had scarcely uttered the words when he found himself with Belleville in the presence of the accused.

Narcisse stood looking vacantly at the judge, the guards, and all about him ; but when he perceived the Count De Loire his face lighted up, and he smiled and nodded to him, as to an old associate. The Count, turning with unutterable loathing from the greeting of his fellow-prisoner, in an imperious tone demanded to be heard. Why had he been dragged—he, a nobleman—through the streets of Paris, like a felon ? With what was he charged ?

"The murder of Aaron Ezra, a Jew, dwelling on the Quai des Orfèvres." Such was the cold, measured reply of the judge, to the passionate appeals of young De Loire : and at the words, Narcisse nodded, rubbed his hands, and evinced the deepest satisfaction at the answer. The Count was about to reply, when he was commanded to be silent—to listen to the evidence which Pierre Grognon, the principal officer, was to adduce. Grognon briefly told his tale : he had that night received secret intelligence of the assassination.

"Is it possible?" was the involuntary exclamation of Belleville to the Marquis.

"Hush, my excellent friend," answered De la Jonquille, "consider where you are."

Grognon continued his statement. He and his men immediately sought the house of the goldsmith. As they halted at the door, the younger prisoner—he had not given his name——

"Narcisse," exclaimed the lacquey, with a low laugh. "Narcisse."

The younger prisoner rushed from the house, and was secured. On entering the dwelling, after some search, the Count was discovered in the same room with the murdered man.

"What are you?" asked the judge of Narcisse.

"Nothing," answered the menial, "or, it may be, please your worship, less than that."

"What took you to the house of the Jew?"

"But, that I would not tell your holiness a lady's secret," answered Narcisse, gravely, "I should say I was to marry the Mayor's daughter, and went to choose a wedding-ring. Alack! the tradesman was choked, and so, sirs, could not serve me. Ha! ha! Had you all been as lucky as Narcisse when you went on such an errand, some of ye might have had fewer wrinkles in your cheeks; perhaps, too, lighter foreheads. Who knows, my masters, eh?"

"This trick will not answer, fellow. Who do you serve?" interrogated the judge.

"Heaven," answered Narcisse.

"Come, sirrah, you have a master."

"I know it," was the prisoner's answer; and Belleville, muffled as he was, and hidden in the crowd, trembled, for he thought the searching eyes of Narcisse had found him.

"Let us fly," exclaimed Belleville to the Marquis, and made a sudden movement to depart; but De la Jonquille grasped him as with a hand of iron, and held him to the spot.

"Tut!" cried the Marquis, "'tis most interesting—you have no curiosity—none."

"Does your master reside in Paris?" asked the judge, believing that he was gradually but surely bringing Narcisse to confession.

"In Paris," answered Narcisse, apparently becoming more rational.

"De la Jonquille!" whispered Belleville, in agony, and struggled in his grasp.

"Hush! and listen," answered the smiling Marquis—"'tis worth the hearing."

"Ay, I thought in Paris," said the judge, humouring the prisoner. "And how long?"

"Oh! long—long—long," replied the accused, very volubly.

"And what is his condition? But, doubtless, he sent you to the house of Aaron?"

Narcisse shook his head.

"Faithful creature!" murmured Belleville in the ear of the Marquis.

"'Tis touching—delicious to find such humble virtue!" observed De la Jonquille.

"He did not send you to the house of the goldsmith? Perhaps, then," continued the judge, "he—your master—was there himself? Eh? Have we hit upon the truth?"

"For once," answered Narcisse; and a fearful exclamation from Belleville was, happily for him, lost in the sudden laughter of the audience.

"Silence!" growled the judge, and knit his threatening brows. Then, with a smile upon his parchment cheek, he again addressed the prisoner. "Your master, then, was at the house of old Aaron? I thought so. Very good: poor lad! fear nothing, but tell the truth. And your master was there when the goldsmith was sacrificed?"

Narcisse stared at the judge, and replied contemptuously, "To be sure—certainly."

"The villain!" muttered Belleville, "he will betray me!"

"Alas! alas!" sighed De la Jonquille, "there is no virtue under the moon."

"Your master," resumed the judge, "has been long in Paris—was at the house of the murdered man when he was killed? This you have confessed." Narcisse bowed. "Now, complete the confession, and tell the court your master's name."

Belleville griped De la Jonquille's arm, and, lowering his head, awaited in paralysing terror the reply that was to denounce him. Narcisse paused. Again the judge put the question.

"What is this master's name?"

"Death!" replied Narcisse, his eye twinkling that he had trapped the judge.

"Excellent Narcisse!" cried Belleville, relieved of a world of apprehension.

"Magnanimous valet!" responded De la Jonquille. "The scene is too affecting, Chevalier—let us to supper." And ere Narcisse and De Loire were dismissed to prison—for the defence

of the Count was heard with cold distrust—Belleville and the Marquis pledged one another—nay, drank to the liberation of the captive Narcisse—in the best wines of Burgundy.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Come, child, make up thy mind, and blab all like a simple virgin. Tell the truth, my pretty lad, and let Beelzebub blush for it. Why carry a secret in thy breast, that, in the end, must choke thee? Spit it out, my gentle boy, and resolve thyself to live and die a gentleman. Come, come, my mannikin, spare me a task, for there's a foolishness in thy face, a simple something that takes me—forces me to give thee good and fatherly counsel—so tell the truth, and save me a worse labour."

Such was the healthy advice bestowed with unusual solicitude upon poor Narcisse, at the time a prisoner in the gaol of Paris. The culprit, lying on a heap of straw, in a narrow, low stone cell, the light struggling through a fissure in the wall, raised his face, and, with sudden meaning in his eyes, bent them on the features of the speaker. There was in the countenance of the prisoner suspicion mingled with melancholy—doubt and mistrust, with a wish to hear more from his counsellor. For a minute Narcisse gazed, then bent his eyes upon the straw, and, drawing it through his fingers, cried mournfully, "And nobody been!—no one asked for the fool!—nobody come to Narcisse! My master," and the captive looked up inquiringly, "who made this place? Men?"

"Men? ay, youth—who should have made it? The fairies, think ye?" asked the visitor.

"If devils ever carried lime and stone, they pitched it somewhere here—eh? Were you ever in the woods?"

"Never; what should I do there, my little man?"

"I was there again last night," said Narcisse, "and saw the trees that used to love me. You needn't laugh. There wasn't a tree that hadn't a face—a voice in its boughs. There was a stream, and last night again I sat beside it, that would talk to me all day and all night. It was dumb in winter, but the sun would come and make it babble again. I knew those trees better than I know the men who walk in Paris. The Lord help me! I had forgotten 'em—but here—here—they have all come back to me. That I should have found my woods in a place of stone!"

"And thou wouldst like to live in the forest once more? Well, then, tell all thou knowest of this sad mistake (it was thus the speaker called the murder of a Jew), and thou mayest go and flourish there."

Narcisse answered not: he placed his fingers to his eyes, and the tears fell upon the straw. His counsellor smiled complacently at the boy's emotion. "And nobody has been?" again cried the captive.

"Stone walls," said the stranger, "are the best of mirrors; they show a man the faces of his true friends. Come, my pretty fellow, I have begged leave for thee to be my guest to-night. Thou shalt come to my room, and we will talk of——ho! Seraphe," and, in answer to the call, a turnkey appeared at the door of the cell, and awaited respectfully the words of the speaker. "I am answerable for this dainty thing—he sups with me to-night—but shall keep good hours. Come, Narcisse, come." And the person who was to play the host to the half-witted prisoner led the way from the dungeon, and, threading many passages, began to ascend a flight of steps, which seemed interminable. "We shall get there at last," said the guide, "though 'tis high climbing—courage, and mount;" and they continued the ascent. "This is the last step, and here is my lofty yet humble abode;" and the speaker opened the door of a small apartment situated at the top of the prison. "Enter and welcome," cried the host, and Narcisse entered a room, plainly appointed, yet, in all respects, with a scrupulous neatness. An old carved oak table, four oak chairs with faded crimson velvet seats, and a small cabinet, in the compartments of which were painted pastoral subjects, composed the principal furniture of the abode. On the mantelpiece was a small carved ivory crucifix, and a picture of the Madonna decorated the wall. A missal lay upon a small table; pots of roses, jasmine, and other odoriferous plants, were disposed about the apartment—the allotted abiding-place of Jacques Tenebræ, hangman of Paris.

When Jacques Tenebræ, for it was his hospitable self, conducted Narcisse to his lofty lodging, it had one inmate who demands of us more than a passing notice. This was a female of about eighteen; she sat with her hand buried in her hair, that hung in profusion down her cheeks and neck, supporting her forehead studiously bent upon a book, which she hastily closed upon the appearance of her father and his simple guest. She rose, and displayed a form of the most perfect elegance, of somewhat above the middle height. Her hair was of the palest gold colour, and hung in long natural curls; her complexion was pale and waxen; her brow wide and square; her grey eyes beamed with settled

with sweetest melancholy; and there was a patient suffering in the meek and expressive lip that at once engaged the sympathies of the beholder. A faint smile rose and vanished from her face as she welcomed her father, and turned with an uneasy look to the figure of his guest, who stood gazing with greedy admiration on the lovely creature before him, and muttering inarticulate sounds of wonder and delight.

"Antoinette, I have brought this silly bird to sup with us, poor thing!—he is of the house,"—it was thus Jacques Tenebræ designated the gaol of Paris,—"and you must treat him kindly."

The girl looked obedience to her father, and then quitted the room, the eyes of Narcisse anxiously following her.

"From this window," said Jacques Tenebræ, "thou hast the fairest view of all Paris. See, boy, there is Notre Dame—and there—there is the Quai des Orfèvres."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Narcisse, and he reeled from the barred casement, for the first time, as it appeared, struck with a sense of loathing, of horror at the deed of the past night. Almost instantaneously his nature had seemed to become more perfect—to be more elevated—more removed from his former self: the dim twilight of his mind seemed to grow into clearer day. He cast a look of horror at Jacques, and then, as though he had expected consolation, turned towards the door; in a moment his face again darkened into gloom.

"Ay, 'twas a foolish, a silly piece of work—and thou must clear thyself of it," said Tenebræ. "Ha! what an accident is this! Look, boy, look; they are bringing from the house the body of the goldsmith. Come and see."

"No—no—no!" exclaimed Narcisse, with violence; when Antoinette entering the room, he sank into a chair, and, scarcely breathing, his hands clasped in each other, he sat and gazed at her—gazed with such a look that the maiden started with momentary apprehension as she met it; but, suddenly recovering her self-possession, with the highest natural dignity, prepared to set the repast upon the table: fruit, wine, cheese, bread, and water, composed the banquet.

"Now, thou foolish cuckoo, draw up, drink, and eat," said Jacques Tenebræ to the rapt Narcisse, who heeded not the summons, until his host, shaking him by the shoulder, brought him to the table. "Come, boy," said Jacques, filling two glasses—his own draught, be it known, half-tempered with water—"Come, here's to thy deliverance! May'st thou soon escape from these walls!"

Narcisse, with his filled glass in his hand, gazed at Antoinette, and did not drink.

"Why, boy—dost hear? Dost"——

But a low knock at the door interrupted the remonstrance of Jacques Tenebræ. Antoinette immediately arose, and answered the summons.

"Welcome, Father—welcome," cried Jacques, as a Capuchin entered the room. "Welcome, Father George; sit and feed with us." The Capuchin seated himself in a chair, brought for him by Antoinette—at the same moment Narcisse let the glass and wine fall from his hand.

"Mille diables!" exclaimed Jacques Tenebræ, jumping from his seat.

"It is not broken, Father," said Antoinette, in the sweetest voice, as she replaced the uninjured glass upon the table.

"Ho! all's well, then; 'tis from Venice, Father George, and was left me, with five others, by the Signor"—but Jacques caught the eye of his daughter, who cast upon him, what seemed the mute remonstrance of a breaking heart, and, hastily filling his glass, he emptied it with—"well, 'tis no matter—since 'tis neither broken nor flawed. Now, boy, fill again—is the lad deaf?—fill for him, Antoinette." The girl obeyed her father; and Narcisse, with glistening eyes, instantly emptied the glass.

"And does *that* happen to-morrow?" asked the Priest; yet, ere he spoke, he cast a look at Antoinette, who immediately quitted the room, Narcisse unconsciously rising from the chair; but, urged by his host, instantly seating himself.

"Yes, he is to roast for it, father; and, though I speak against my own bread, I am sorry for it," answered Jacques Tenebræ. "Will his death do any good?"

"Assuredly," answered the Capuchin, "undoubtedly. 'Twill satisfy the Church."

"Humph!" cried Jacques Tenebræ; and, forgetting the reverend presence of his guest, the hangman began to chirrup a snatch of a drinking-song. "Your pardon, father—I had forgotten: well, there may be virtue in fagots, but, burn me if I can see what good is to come of making cinders of the gipsy." *

"That is the fault of thy ignorance, son Jacques," answered the Capuchin, and he sipped his wine.

"No doubt," replied Tenebræ; "but tell me, if instead of

* Ambreville, a noted gipsy, has been burnt at Paris for having uttered horrible blasphemies. The king had often pardoned him for various crimes; but he refused to forgive him one so atrocious. Léance, his sister, is confined in the Hôpital Général.—*Marquis de Dangeau's Mémoires of the Court of France.*

burning the poor devil, it would not be better to clap him up somewhere, and teach him better?"

"Such reprobates are not to be taught," said the Monk.

"Not? What then?" asked the hangman.

"Exterminated," replied the holy man, and he emptied his glass. "Death is their rightful punishment."

Jacques Tenebræ, the hangman of Paris, quaffed his wine and water, and drew his chair near the chair of Father George, the most rigid and conscientious monk of the order—such, at least, was his reputation,—and, in a tone of familiar confidence—for the friar was Antoinette's confessor—said, "Father George, I want you to instruct me: never mind that poor lad—poor innocent!" cried Jacques, observing that the monk glanced at the vacant Narcisse; "yes, I want your counsel in an affair of conscience," cried the hangman.

"Thou shalt have it," was the benevolent promise of the Monk.

"Thou hast called death a punishment, most holy Father; let us debate that simple point;" and Jacques sidled still closer to his reverend guest.

The declining sun shone through the casement, and, falling upon the heads of the executioner and the Monk, bent, as they were, towards each other, presented a strange and striking contrast of character as developed in their features. The Monk's face was long and sallow—marked with deep lines about the mouth, which seemed restless with ill-concealed passions; his eye was black, full, and heavy—a joyless, unreposing eye. The countenance of Jacques Tenebræ was round and somewhat jovial: a love of mirth appeared to twinkle in his look, and his lips seemed made for laughter; his black hair and beard were sprinkled with white, and his complexion was a clear, deep brown, flushed in the cheek with wholesome red. The sun, shining upon these heads, brought out their opposite characters in the strongest relief to each other. A stranger, looking at them from a distance, would have thought the hangman some humble, yet wealthy, good-tempered citizen of Paris, consulting with his household adviser, on a daughter's portion, a son's patrimony, or some other domestic arrangement. Very different was the subject which at that hour supplied the discourse of Jacques Tenebræ, the hangman of Paris, and Father George, the austere Capuchin.

"Thou dost call death a punishment?" repeated the executioner. "I live by it, and should, therefore, with the wisdom of this world"——

"The wisdom of this world is arrant folly," interrupted the Capuchin.

"I am of thy ghostly opinion," observed Jacques Tenebræ, "as to a good deal of it. Yet, death being made a punishment, makes my profession; and, my profession—I speak this to thee in private, and as a friend—my profession is little less than an arrant folly; a mistake—a miserable blunder."

"The saints protect me! What meanest thou by such wild discourse?" inquired Father George.

"Hear me out—listen to the hangman!" cried Jacques Tenebræ. "There is another world—eh?—good Father George."

The Capuchin moved suddenly from the side of the querist, and surveyed him with a look of horror.

"Nay, nay, answer me," said Jacques; "but for the form of argument. 'Twas for that I put the question."

"'Tis scarcely lawful even so to put it," said the Monk. "However, let it be granted—there is another world."

"And all men must die?" asked Jacques Tenebræ. "Eh?—is it not so?"

"We come into the world doomed to the penalty," replied the Capuchin. "Death is the common lot of all."

"Of the good, and the wise, and the unwise. Eh, Father?" cried Jacques.

"'Tis very certain," answered the Monk.

"If such, then, be the case," said Tenebræ, "if no virtue, no goodness, no wisdom, no strength, can escape death—if death be made, as you say, the penalty of the good, why should it be thought the punishment of the wicked? Why should that be thought the only doom for the blackest guilt, which it may be at the very same hour, the brightest virtue is condemned to suffer? Answer me that!" cried the hangman.

"'Tis a point above thy apprehension, Jacques Tenebræ," replied Father George, apparently desirous of changing the discourse. "Let it rest, Jacques, for abler wits than thine."

"You would not kill a culprit's soul, Father George?" asked Jacques, heedless of the wishes of the Capuchin.

"What horror dost thou talk!" exclaimed the Monk.

"But for argument," said the unmoved Jacques. "Nay, I am sure thou wouldst not. I have heard thee talk such consolation to a culprit that, at the time, I have thought it a blessed thing to die. Well, he died—and the laws, as the cant runs, were avenged. The repentant thief—the penitent blood-shedder, was dismissed from the further rule of man; perhaps the very day he was punished, a hundred pious, worthy souls were called from the world; he was discharged from the earth, and—but thou knowest what thou hast twenty times promised such misdoers, when I should have done my office on them."

"Thou art ignorant, Jacques Tenebræ—basely ignorant; thou art so familiarised with death, it has lost its terrors to thee," said the Capuchin, who again strove to shift the discourse.

"Of that anon, Father George: as for death on the scaffold, 'tis nothing—but I have seen the death of a good man, in his Christian bed," said Jacques, "and that was awful."

"Thou dost own as much?" observed Father George; "thou dost confess it?"

"Awful, yet cheering; and 'twas whilst I beheld it that the thought came to me of my own worthlessness"——

"As a sinner," interrupted the Capuchin.

"And hangman," cried Jacques. "I thought it took from the holiness, the beauty—if I may say it—of the good man's fate—the common fate, as you rightly call it, Father—to give death to the villain—to make it the last punishment, by casting him at one fling from the same world with the pious, worthy creature, who died yesterday. Now, the law would not, could not if it would, kill the soul, and—but thou knowest what passes between thy brotherhood and the condemned, thou knowest what thou dost promise to the penitent culprit—and, therefore, to kill a man for his crimes would be a fitting, a reasonable custom if this world were all, if there were nought beyond. Then see you, Father George, thou wouldst hasten the evil-doer into nothingness; now dost thou speed him into felicity. Eh?—Am I not right—is it not so, holy Father?"

"And is such thy thought—thy true thought?" inquired the Capuchin.

"I thank my stars it is, else I had not held my trade so long. Punishment! Bah! I call myself the rogues' chamberlain, taking them from a wicked world, and putting them quietly to rest. When he who signs the warrant for their exit—and, thinking closely what we all are, 'tis bold writing i'faith—must some day die too,—when the ermine tippet must, at some time, lie down with the hempen string, it is, methinks, a humorous way of punishment, this same hanging."

"I tell thee, Jacques Tenebræ," cried the Priest, "thy coarse faculties, made familiar with such scenes, cannot apprehend their awfulness—their public use. The example that"——

"Ho! hold you there, Father—example! 'Tis a brave example to throttle a man in the public streets: why, I know the faces of my audiences as well as Dominique did. I can show you a hundred who never fail at the gallows' foot to come and gather good example. Do you think, most holy Father, that the mob of Paris come to a hanging as to a sermon—to amend their lives at the gibbet? No: many come as they would take an extra

dram; it gives their blood a fillip—stirs them for an hour or two: many to see a fellow-man act a scene which they themselves must one day undergo: many, as to the puppets and ballad-singers at the Pont Neuf: but, for example, why Father, as I am an honest executioner, I have in my day done my office upon twenty, all of whom were the constant visitors of years' standing at my morning levees."

"Is it possible?" asked the Monk.

"Believe the hangman," answered Jacques Tenebræ.

"And thou wouldst punish no evil-doer with death?" inquired Father George.

"As I am an honest minister of the law, and live by rope, not I: for this sufficient reason; nature having made death the punishment of all men, it is too good a portion for rogues; the more especially when softened by the discourses of thy brotherhood."

"And thou wouldst hang no man?" again asked the Friar with rising wrath.

"Though I speak it to my loss," cried Jacques, "not I!"

"Jacques Tenebræ, for the wickedness of thy heart," exclaimed the Capuchin, "I command thee, for penance, to pronounce every morn and night forty aves, five-and-thirty paternosters, fifty"——

The door was suddenly opened, and Seraphe, the gaoler, unceremoniously entering the apartment, cut short the sentence of the Monk.

"What is this?" asked the unshaken Jacques, taking a paper from the hands of the turnkey.

"'Tis something for to-morrow," answered Seraphe, and his eyes wandered towards Narcisse, who sat, as in a stupor, wholly unconscious of the late animated controversy.

"Very good," answered Jacques, and Seraphe took his leave. "Father, I'll think of your penance, and mend my opinions. Narcisse! Ho, boy—a draught of wine, and then you must back to bed." Saying this, Tenebræ filled the prisoner's glass, and, whilst he emptied it, leaned back in his chair to read the paper.

It was a warrant commanding that, at to-morrow noon, the prisoner Narcisse, hitherto stubborn and silent on the murder of the Jew, be racked that he might confess. Time was taken to consider the case of the Count de Loire.

CHAPTER IX.

"And no one—no one been here to-day?" asked the miserable Narcisse. "No one?"

"You have friends in Paris, then?"

"No, no—none—not one," answered the youth, and he fixed his blue eyes upon the speaker, and the tears poured down his white, motionless face.

It was the evening of the day following the receipt of the warrant, and the cruelty therein commanded had been fearfully fulfilled. Narcisse was bound and tortured—his lips were white with agony, but nothing escaped them to accuse the murderer; when the torment was most terrible, and life was all but torn from him, he uttered one word, and fainted—that word was "Antoinette." The miserable, outraged wretch was unbound, and carried to his straw. It was sunset, and the daughter of Jacques Tenebræ—the indulgence had been obtained by the interest of her father—stood beside the pallet of the prisoner; he lay moaning in helpless misery; but was silent, and a smile flickered in his ashy face when he heard the soft, sweet, compassionate voice of the maiden. She had brought a cordial for the wounded prisoner, and knelt beside his straw to offer it to him. He touched it with his lips, and again cried—"And no one—no one been to-day?"

"No one," answered Seraphe. "What people did you expect?"

Narcisse replied not to the question, but muttered to himself—"He might have come." He then fixed his eyes on Antoinette; they seemed to be lighted with new intelligence as they gazed upon her. "I can die so—so," cried Narcisse.

"There is pardon, full pardon," said Antoinette, "if thou wilt confess."

"Confess—what?" asked Narcisse.

"All thou knowest about this sad mischance—the death of Aaron. Poor lad! thou hast suffered, and wilt suffer, for ungrateful wickedness. Dost thou not perceive thou art left in misery, deserted at thy need?"

"Speak—speak—speak!" cried Narcisse, as the maiden suddenly paused. "The brook—the swinging boughs—and the bird in the bush—I loved to hear them; but, I think, your words are better than all—better—better."

"Do not cast away thy life," urged Antoinette; "let the guilty suffer."

"What is my life?" asked Narcisse: "a straw—a feather—a torn rag."

"Not so, not so," said the maiden; "thou mayest go back to the world, and dwell in happiness. Become a worthy citizen"——

"Keep my coach and horses; who can tell?" cried Narcisse.

"Speak the truth," said Antoinette; "God and man demand it of thee."

"The truth! What is it?" asked Narcisse. "God knows it: and for man, though he had torn away my legs and arms, could he find it? The judges hunt for truth in the marrow of a man—but is it there?" Narcisse uttered these words in a scream of anguish, then lay exhausted, moaning in the straw. Again Antoinette stooped by his side, and with the cordial wetted his lips and chafed his brow and temples.

"God help thee!" prayed the maiden, and she rose to depart.

"Antoinette!" cried Narcisse, in a tone of appealing misery, and the girl paused. "Tell me—one word—did they send you for torture, eh?"

"Torture, Narcisse!" said Seraphe, who stood in a corner of the dungeon: "has she not relieved you?"

"When they did their worst," said Narcisse, looking at Antoinette, "it was nothing—iron and rope, I hardly felt 'em—and the fellow in a hood whispered and shook his hand to pray, and then frighten the truth—as they called it—from me; but now they have sent you—you—with your eyes like stars, and words of honey, to make the fool confess;—but no, no, no!" cried Narcisse, stubbornly; and then he sighed—"that you should be with my judges!"

"Do not think it, Narcisse: I came in pity of your misery;—though I am the daughter of Jacques Tenebræ, I am not the hireling of the law," said Antoinette, and her pale face was for an instant flushed with emotion.

"Pity! pity!" cried Narcisse: "then thou hast a heart—do they not call it so?—a heart for me?"

"I hope a heart for all like thee,—miserable and, as I think, oppressed—the poor dupe, the faithful, unthinking instrument of crafty evil." With these words Antoinette turned from the prisoner, and was about to quit the dungeon, when the friar George, followed by two strangers, entered the cell. Antoinette stepped back, and turned her face from the glare of a torch carried by one of the gaolers.

"Save ye, daughter!" said the Capuchin; and Antoinette,

bowing a meek acknowledgment of the greeting, glided from the dungeon. "This is the culprit," observed the Monk in a low voice, drawing near to the couch of Narcisse.

"Has he confessed?" asked one of the visitors, in a loud whisper.

"Wickedly stubborn," replied the Monk. "Nought has been left untried to come at the truth."

"And yet he has not relented!" cried the stranger, in astonishment.

"Come, we have seen enough!" said the second visitor, pulling the cloak of his companion. "Come!"

As he spoke, Narcisse unclosed his eyes, and, in his low chuckle, cried, "He's come—he's come!"

"What sayest thou?" asked the Capuchin, and he bent towards Narcisse.

"He's come—come!"— answered the culprit. "I knew it—was sure of it!"

"Who is come, my child? Tell me—who? Speak to thy ghostly father;" and the Monk knelt beside Narcisse, and bent his ear to the lips of the criminal. "Speak—what meanest thou, poor sufferer?"

"Quick—quick!" muttered Belleville to the Marquis; for De la Jonquille had compelled the Chevalier, half by persuasion and half by taunting sarcasm, to venture into the prison to look comfort to his faithful servant, tortured for his master's act. "Quick—let us go!"

De la Jonquille stood unmoved, gazing upon the Capuchin and the prisoner.

"Tell me what weighs upon thy crushed, thy broken heart," murmured the priest to Narcisse; who replied to his exhortations and his prayers with a scornful laugh. The priest hastily rose, and looking towards the strangers, stretched his hand above the scoffing criminal. "This is horrible!" said the Capuchin.

"And after all the cares of justice—after all the pains bestowed upon him, to be still obdurate! 'Tis an afflicting spectacle!" cried De la Jonquille.

"Nought is so wicked as the human heart," pronounced the Capuchin, with great fervour. "Nought so vile and ignorant."

"It is hard to look upon this broken wretch—you do not mark him," said De la Jonquille to the Chevalier—"and deny thy melancholy creed, most holy Father."

"Has the prisoner no friends—no kindred?" asked Belleville.

"None—none," cried Narcisse from his straw, and his master shuddered at his voice.

"None, my poor fellow?" said De la Jonquille, stooping close to him.

"Yes—yes—one—one," answered Narcisse.

"And who is he?—Speak! I command ye!" shouted the Capuchin. "Who is this friend?"

"God!" replied Narcisse.

"He is stubborn, and will not confess," said the Capuchin to the strangers, and, with resentment in his sallow face, he passed from the dungeon.

"Farewell!" cried De la Jonquille, casting a look towards the criminal, who answered not.

"Farewell!" cried the Chevalier, and his voice trembled, and he did not dare to meet the eyes of his faithful, outraged servant.

"Farewell!" answered Narcisse, and the door of the dungeon closed upon him. As it closed, the prisoner swallowed the gift of the Marquis de la Jonquille.

"Who—who was that maiden in the dungeon?" asked Belleville, as he stepped from the cell.

"A fair, good girl—a flower springing from a rock of flint," answered the Capuchin.

"But who is she—whence comes she? What a noble presence!" cried the Chevalier; and, in his admiration of the beautiful Antoinette, Narcisse was instantly forgotten.

"Doubtless a lady of a first house: one of the seraphic, benevolent souls, who quit the home of luxury to haunt a prison —who leave the heartless fopperies of the mode, to come and hear the prayers of penitent guilt, to whisper consolation to afflicted innocence. She must be one of these," said the Marquis.

"Her face, her air, every gesture, declares her to be noble," cried Belleville. "Who can she be?"

"Guess," said De la Jonquille, with a smiling face, taking his friend aside. "Guess, who should she be?"

"I know not—plague me not with riddles—tell me, for I am in torture"——

"Are you, i'faith? Then hast thou changed lots with poor Narcisse, for he, or I mistake not, is, ere this, relieved. Why, Belleville"——

"Are you mad," exclaimed the Chevalier, "to speak my name, and here?"

"Why not here? Dost think it a charm to bring the roof upon thy head? But for the girl—for the lady. Was ever fortune so auspicious to a lover! Now canst thou do a gallant, dainty bit of service," cried the Marquis.

"Speak—in the devil's name"——

"Hush!" exclaimed De la Jonquille,—"be chary of such vulgar conjurations. Thou dost remember—yes, thou canst not have forgotten Eugene de Loire."

"Have done with this untimely jesting: forgotten him! Well?"

"He had, you know, a lady-love, one Claire de Merival—there was a certain diamond necklace"——

"De la Jonquille!" exclaimed the Chevalier.

"Silence! silence! my best of friends," said the Marquis, with mock apprehension—"in this place, I pray thee, handle my delicate name as thou would'st touch a rose-leaf: *thou* mightest escape, but, discovered here, my doom is certain. Shall I finish my story?"

"Go on," cried Belleville moodily.

"Eugene de Loire is at this moment prisoner here, charged—perhaps thou hast heard the story—with killing an old rat of a goldsmith, one Aaron Ezra, of the Quai des Orfèvres: 'tis thought he is not altogether guilty of the crime, and that a simple fellow—they put him to the torture this morning—could, if he would, denounce the true villain. Well, what more likely than a visit from Claire de Merival, the affianced bride, to her plighted lord, the Count de Loire?—what more natural than that she should add her supplications, her prayers, or threats, to the tender wisdom, the affectionate zeal of the law, as already tried, and found ineffectual—such is the stubbornness of guilt—on the limbs of the low domestic, wretched Narcisse?"

"Thou dost not mean to say 'twas the Lady Claire in the dungeon of—of"——

"Of the murderer?" said the Marquis. "To declare to you my simple soul, I have beaten my brains, and, to my mind, she can be no other than that bright, soft-hearted damsel."

"Impossible!" cried Belleville.

"Why?"

"I have seen the Lady Claire, and know it was not she," replied the Chevalier.

"No! Tut! the Monk is gone, or"——

"No matter; let us go too: I was a fool to be brought hither"——

"And is such my recompense for the angelic vision that has blessed thine eyes? Who could the lady be? Stay: I think I know this honest, open face;" and De la Jonquille pointed to a man advancing towards them. "Dost thou?"

"Not I."

"Let us inquire of him:" and the Marquis advanced to meet Jacques Tenebræ, the hangman of Paris.

CHAPTER X.

"SAVE ye, most worthy sir," cried the Marquis to the gibbet functionary; "save ye, most excellent Jacques!"

Jacques Tenebræ bent his good-tempered eyes upon the Marquis with a look of distrust. It was but for a moment; he instantly understood the courteous banter of De la Jonquille, and met it with a like spirit. "Save your excellency," cried Jacques Tenebræ, doffing his cap, and bowing ceremoniously.

"What is he?" asked Belleville, in a whisper, of the Marquis.

"A most worthy and conscientious professor," answered De la Jonquille; "one whom you must know, my dear Belleville. A man of highest public trust."

"And here?" cried the Chevalier.

"Hush," cried De la Jonquille, and then stepping forward, he begged of Tenebræ to be permitted to introduce to him a friend who nourished the profoundest admiration of his professional talents. "Ha! my dear Jacques," cried the Marquis, "thou shouldst hear—even though at the risk of some foolish blushing—yet thou shouldst hear the praises he has lavished upon thee."

The hangman with a look of wary humour, bowed towards the Chevalier, somewhat perplexed by the words of his tormenting companion. Belleville, however, coldly returned the civility of Jacques.

"And he is a man, most excellent sir, whose opinions are worth—worth—ay, worth diamonds," continued the Marquis, leering at Belleville. "A man who has travelled the world, and in cities, blessed with the highest civilisation, has attended the lectures of thy brother professors—has witnessed a hundred demonstrations of their skill in the highest as in the simplest branch of the philanthropic art. In Vienna, now, the far-famed —what's his name?" asked the Marquis of the staring Chevalier.

"Katz, as I have heard," said Jacques.

"True; the great Katz—after thy adroitness, my friend deems him the veriest bungler. Pity it is, my dear, good sir," cried the Marquis, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the complacent Tenebræ, "pity it is, that in this wise and noble city of Paris, thy profession gains so little from the veneration, so little from the pockets of men."

"We might be better paid," observed Jacques, seriously; "but as for the veneration, as thou callest it, for myself, I am willing to compound for the love of the world, for a little more of that which the world loves best."

"Thou hast the wisdom of a whole college," said the Marquis. "Yet I would have thy function—being as it is, of the first importance to the state"——

"And the last," interrupted Jacques Tenebræ, with a suspicious glance at the Marquis.

"And the last," repeated the phlegmatic De la Jonquille: "I would have it dignified by outward trappings, as it is doubtless sustained and illumined by inward light. Look at thy brother at Hamburgh"——

"I have no brother—oh! I understand," cried Jacques. "You mean the"——

"True," said the Marquis. "Wert thou not, Jacques, a philosopher of the sublimest class, thoud'st wither, rot with envy to think of his salary, his perquisites, his gallant suits. Hath he not fees from the vaults of the city—does an ox, or a horse die that he does not inherit its coat?—does he not sometimes banquet with the lords of the hall, with men who quarter arms from the ark itself, all of whom do rightful reverence to his useful calling? And, then, for his outward gear! As I am a Frenchman, Jacques, I blush and burn with sorrow for my countrymen to look at thy humble weed."

"'Tis well enough," cried Jacques, carelessly brushing his sleeve.

"Well enough, in thy estimation, philosopher as thou art," continued De la Jonquille; "but thou knowest this world is half made up of eyes, and they must be dazzled. Hence, I would have thee, like the Hamburgher, dressed in satins and velvet, thy legs in silk shining like glass, thy garters spangled, crimson roses in thy shoes, and on thy wise and solemn head a Spanish hat with streaming feather. Nor shouldst thou stir abroad without six lacqueys at least to clear the way and follow thee."

"Nay, nay, 'twould be too much," cried Jacques Tenebræ, modestly.

"Not a whit—not more than thy reverend and venerable office demands and justifies. Didst thou ever contemplate the origin of thy serious calling?" asked Belleville.

"Never," answered Jacques.

"'Tis worth the labour," said De la Jonquille; "albeit, the study might confuse thy simple brains among the lumber of antiquity. Trust me, Jacques, and I have pondered on the theme, thy sect hath had great beginnings—great beginnings."

"No doubt—no doubt," observed Jacques, gradually interested by the fascinating earnestness of De la Jonquille.

"Thou hast been the chosen instrument of kingly wrath—the minister of imperial vengeance: thou wert great in Egypt, Jacques—ay, mighty in the days of Pharaoh; and, alas! how, from the state with which barbarians—as, in our effeminate conceit, we call them—were wise and just enough to surround thee, how art thou shrunk and fallen! Thou who hast been the prop of thrones, how art thou dwindled from thy greatness! Once, Jacques, thou wert terrible in thy mysteries—awful by the companionship of the mighty of the earth; now, I speak it in all tenderness, yet must the truth be said, now art thou by the new wisdom of this foolish age plucked of thy useful terrors, and pulled from the footstools of kings, who may not, as in the olden time, send thee as it pleased them on their hasty errands; but must be content, to take some counsel, ere they bid thee speed. Thou who, by the mute consent of men, wert held the only true chastiser of all mortal crimes—thou art questioned, despitefully libelled, nay, all thy solemn functions called to account, and, in the hardy ignorance of a self-willed generation, condemned as—that I should live to speak it!—worse than needless. Is it not so, Jacques?" asked De la Jonquille.

"Humph! the Capuchins, at least, are on our side," said Jacques, remembering the zeal of Father George.

"Oh! and more—authority is still with thee; and so, with tolerable fortune, thy great-grandson may inherit thy office. Meanwhile, comfort thee with the thoughts of thy past glories—soothe thy spirit, good Jacques, in these evil times, with recollections of what thou hast been."

"What—what is he?" whispered Belleville impatiently to the Marquis.

"Cast thine eyes back to the days of wisdom, and live in the past," said De la Jonquille.

"And are we become so despised—are we thought so useless?" asked Jacques Tenebræ. "All this, good sir, is news to me. By my faith! I thought my trade still well spoken of—still considered, as I may say, the best security of good lives and good manners."

"And so it is, save by a few. At this moment, the poison is eating the very heart of thy gallows-tree," cried De la Jonquille.

"Gallows!" exclaimed Belleville, starting back, and for the first moment apprehending the employment of Jacques.

"What poison?" asked Tenebræ.

"Ink!" answered De la Jonquille.

"Ink!" echoed Tenebræ, with a look of laughing wonderment.

"Ink," continued De la Jonquille, "flung it may be from garrets, is now eating at the heart of the gibbet—slowly, yet surely, crumbling the fetters of the slave—yea, consuming walls of flint."

Tenebræ gazed earnestly in the face of De la Jonquille; then laughing loudly, cried—"I hope, your excellency, a poor fellow may be an honest hangman, yet have no head for riddles. If the gibbet stand till it be pricked down by goose-quills, why, 'twill serve my time, I think; and when I am gone, whether there be gallows or no gallows, shall I, think ye, sleep the worse for't? Say I not well, and please your excellency?" cried the executioner.

"Wisely and well," replied De la Jonquille; "wert thou the cardinal himself, thou couldst not speak with finer sense of official morals. Butter thy bread, friend Tenebræ, and a *fico* for posterity."

"The girl—the maiden," whispered the Chevalier to De la Jonquille, as he was about to turn away.

"I had forgotten," cried the Marquis, and he again addressed the hangman. "There was a goddess here, she vanished as you came"——

"A woman?" asked Tenebræ, knitting his brows.

"An angel!" exclaimed Belleville impatiently.

"Likely," replied the hangman. "I have heard the prisoners say that such things sometimes come here. Let us hope so," and Jacques abruptly turned to depart.

"Tarry, Jacques, and tell us," cried De la Jonquille, "who this bright divinity may be. At this moment, her eyes are burning the breast of my friend,—a gentleman who can trace his pedigree up to Eden, give him but time enough for the task,—a gallant of golden fortunes, who, in a word, would wed the maid to-morrow."

"What!" exclaimed Belleville.

"I should have said," continued the imperturbable Marquis, "this very night, without one question of her wealth or her condition."

"Humph!" cried Jacques. "You speak of the wench whose foolish pity took her to the straw of the poor innocent?"

"Ay—surely;" replied Belleville, impatiently. "Who is she? Where can she be found?"

"She is not for such as you, most noble, sir," answered Tenebræ. "She looks somewhat higher."

"I said she was of noble birth," observed De la Jonquille; "her

face—her form—her footstep—her voice,—all things declare it. And is she betrothed, good Jacques?"

"Ay," answered Tenebræ, "be sure of it—betrothed."

"Impossible?" cried Belleville. "To whom?"

"Here comes one will tell ye," replied Jacques, and he pointed to Father George, the Capuchin, who slowly advanced towards them.

"Most holy Father," said De la Jonquille, stepping to meet him.

"He is dead!" cried the Capuchin in a hollow voice, and with an unmoved countenance, "the wretch is dead!"

"What—Narcisse?" exclaimed Belleville, with the smile of hope upon his lip, "Narcisse?"

"Ay—the murderer is passed to judgment," answered the Monk.

"Thank Heaven!" cried the Chevalier, feeling that a dangerous witness was removed. "Thank Heaven!"

"What!" roared the Marquis, and his eyes glowed like fiery coals upon the abject face of Belleville, who started at their terrible glare. "'Tis well, Chevalier, thou hast the spirit of thanksgiving for all blessings—even for so small a benefit as the death of a foolish murderer. I would I had a touch of thy true gratitude," and De la Jonquille smiled with withering scorn upon his trembling friend. Then, with a sprightly look and a laughing voice, he clapped Belleville on the shoulder, telling him to take heart, and breathe his grateful thanks for all such mercies.

"Poor boy!—poor child!" cried Jacques Tenebræ—"ay, 'twas rough work—I thought 'twould end so."

"His blood be upon his own head!" exclaimed the pious Capuchin, at the same time exhibiting a small phial found on the pallet of Narcisse, conveyed to him by the compassionate Marquis.

"Poison!" cried Belleville.

"The hardened wretch!" answered the Capuchin; "but such is the iniquity of man."

"The precipitate villain," remarked De la Jonquille, "when, had he waited but another week, a second lesson from the worthy Jacques might have changed his stony heart, turning it into loving flesh for all mankind. That the rack should be so defrauded!"

"Were you with him when he died?" asked Belleville, timidly, of the Capuchin.

"Ay," answered Father George. "My spirit was touched with compassion for his desolate soul, and I returned to his cell,

to censure and to comfort him. I found him sinking into death—and now is he"——

"No doubt—no doubt," remarked De la Jonquille, hastily interrupting the Monk. "And did he not confess?—spoke he not of accomplices?—of villains who had left him a scapegoat for the law?"

"He said," replied the Monk—"but, as I am a Christian, I think he knew not what he uttered—he said that Rupert was to blame."

"Indeed! if he could be found, now," observed the Marquis fixing his eyes on the shuddering Belleville—"if Rupert should prove no shadow—no creature of an idiot's dream!"

"Poor lad!—poor, broken thing!" sighed Jacques Tenebræ.

"And then," continued the Monk, in softest whispers, "he called on Antoinette to kiss him ere he died."

"The dog!" exclaimed the wrathful hangman, the blood mounting to his paternal cheeks.

"I shouted to him, but I spoke to clay; and now, I repeat—now is he"——

"True—most true," again interrupted the Marquis—"now is he offal for the grave."

"Not so, I trust," replied the Capuchin. "I come to beg his body."

"For what, most holy Father?" asked Jacques Tenebræ, "if not to give it Christian burial?"

"Christian burial!" screamed the Monk, retreating, as he spoke, from the illiterate hangman—"when he should be burned to ashes, and scattered to the winds! Hast no religion, Jacques Tenebræ?" asked the Monk, frowningly.

"Nay, Father, please to remember I am neither cardinal nor abbot; I speak but as a hangman."

"So please your Holiness," said De la Jonquille, deferentially, to the Capuchin——

"Such title is not for me, most noble sir," said Father George, with a forbearing smile.

"True; not yet—not yet," replied the Marquis, courteously bowing. "Pardon me, most pious Father, I was fain to ask what would ye with the wicked carcass of that miserable boy?"

"The Church can turn even such vile clay to a golden purpose," answered the Monk.

"The Church knows nothing of the philosopher's stone—though it may sometimes burn those who hunt for it," said De la Jonquille; "yet can I not guess to what rich use even the Church, with all its wisdom, can put the racked anatomy of a dead footman."

"Because thou art wholly of this world," replied the Capuchin, "and canst not comprehend the watchful love—the sleepless charity—of our most holy order, for the souls of men. Attend and learn."

De la Jonquille, with well-acted reverence, bent towards the Monk. Belleville surveyed him with looks of intense interest, and Jacques Tenebræ, with a dull, nay, dogged air of unconcern.

"We have long needed, for the discipline of erring souls, a body so unhallowed—so vile—so hung about with terror as that in yonder dungeon," said the Monk.

"Poor boy!" said the hangman. "Heaven help us!"

"Peace, or get you hence, Jacques Tenebræ," thundered the Capuchin; and Jacques stood abashed at the reproof. "In our most religious house, for the wholesome penance of the younger brotherhood, we have long yearned for some instrument of horror—some appalling shape—to work a healthful cure in the diseased passions of our wicked and fallen nature."

"Ha! 'tis, as thou sayest, a vile world, Father George," observed De la Jonquille, "and the men, saving your ghostly presence, whether frocked or unfrocked, at the best but snakes and tigers."

"Thou sayest truly, my son," answered the Capuchin, with a sigh.

"And yet I have sometimes thought," continued the Marquis—and he spoke in his silverest tone—"that if the world were indeed so bad—that if the men that crowded and struggled in it were such monsters as thy Mother Church, in her best charity, avouches them to be—I have thought it marvellous that the sun should shine upon them—that the corn should spring, and the fruits ripen for the delight and nourishment of such miserable outcasts."

"The thought, my son," replied the Monk, gazing steadfastly in the unmoved face of De la Jonquille, "shows thy humility."

"To be sure, thy fraternity would make the enjoyment of these good gifts a—but we wander from the theme. Thou camest to beg the body of the murderer. Alack! for what?" asked De la Jonquille.

"I have said, as an instrument of penance," answered Father George.

"Penance! why, what wouldst do with it?" asked Jacques Tenebræ. "Penance!"

"Even yesterday, we might have turned it to good service. Brother Martin—I fear me a sluggard in the goodly work—transgressed our holy rule, and worshipped the belly-god. He was known to eat an onion in a time of fast. We would have

chastised his gluttony with the carcass of the murderer and the self-slayer!"

"Chastise him—and with the dead?" asked Jacques Tenebræ, "and for an onion dinner swallowed in forbidden hours!"

"He is young, and must be disciplined. For penance, we would have made him share his bed with the body of the culprit," said Father George, with the air of a man who has hit upon a notable discovery.

"I see thy wisdom, most holy Father," cried De la Jonquille, "thould'st make a mummery of the wretch—keep him as a pet bugbear for the terror of the sinful. Ha! ha! A notable device!"

"They who would reclaim wayward spirits must deem no labour irksome for the goodly end," said the Monk, and clasping his hands, he raised his eyes to heaven.

"Shall I take your wishes to the Governor?" asked Tenebræ. "If the child be really dead, no doubt you will be welcome to him—though, by my conscience, 'tis a strange jewel to come a-begging for. Shall I speed to the Governor, most holy Father?" again asked Jacques, and the Monk having assented, the hangman departed on his errand.

"The Governor cannot have the heart to disappoint the brotherhood," said De la Jonquille.

"I have all faith in his religious dispositions," answered Father George.

"Poor Narcisse!" cried the Marquis. "'Tis to be hoped, for his reputation, that, as time runs, the Capuchins will, at least, preserve his identity."

"What meanest thou?" asked the Monk, with a distrustful glance.

"Why, as the world spins round, things are somehow apt to get misplaced—and then they get new names,—and thus weak men are gulled,—and so——"

"Why, what is this?" inquired the Monk, awakened to suspicion by the sneering lip of the speaker. "Of what things dost thou speak!"

"Hear me, pious Father," answered De la Jonquille, with feigned humility; "in the confusion which time is apt to bring upon the holiest of relics, unless thy brotherhood keep especial guardianship of the carcass thou comest to petition for, is it impossible—mark me—I ask is it impossible—for I would not hint its vulgar likelihood—that Narcisse, the footman—the boy—the murderer of a venerable greyhaired Jew—the tortured felon, Narcisse, dying on a felon's straw, may not in future times be shown to trembling, gaping hundreds, as a stout son of the Church?"

"Peace!" exclaimed the Monk.

"A martyr—a gallant martyr for her glories?"

"Wilt have done?" roared the Capuchin.

"More: may not his fingers—so dexterous in picking purses—be shown and sacrificed to as the healing fingers of a saint, touching away fevers—healing leprosies?"

"Peace, I say!" thundered the priest. "It is impossible!"

"Let us hope so," coolly answered De la Jonquille. "And yet, good Father George, in some hundred years or two, who shall secure Narcisse from such promotion? Such things have been, and—well—well—courtesy is my foible—thou frownest—for me, then, they shall be impossible." And De la Jonquille, with a look of laughing scorn, at which even the Capuchin recoiled, doffed his hat, and placing his arm in the arm of Belleville, walked rapidly away.

CHAPTER XI.

"Marquis," said Belleville, as the two friends hurried from the prison, "Paris is no longer a place of safety. We must hence."

"And whither?" asked the careless De la Jonquille. "Shall we to your estate in Westphalia? or, with no further word, shall we pack up for your Roman palazzo?"

"For Heaven's sake!" cried Belleville, and at the adjuration his companion suddenly stopt, and cast at the Chevalier a look that seemed to wither him; then, with a bitter laugh, observed—

"My best friend, Belleville, I pray ye, conjure in some other name!"

"Wilt never be grave?" asked Belleville, despondingly. "What's to be done?"

"What has been done," answered the Marquis. "Fools grow with the season, and we must wait the harvest."

"But not in Paris; not where blood still cries against us."

"*Us!* My hands are white as Alpine snow. What should I fear? And for yourself, dear Belleville, you might as well hope to flee from your own shadow, as from the voice of blood that here in splendid, laughing Paris, still pursues you. Turn hermit—take lodging in a cave—drink from the brook, and eat from the herbs of the field, that voice will still be at your ear—the face of the Jew will still peep out from the

trees—and the laugh of poor Narcisse—his light and rapid step will still come to you from every bush—will still follow you."

"Why do you tell me this?" exclaimed Belleville, in a voice of terror.

"Because I'd do the office of a friend, and save ye travelling expenses. Can you not die here as well"——

"Die!" cried the Chevalier.

"Die," replied the stolid Marquis. "You must die somewhere, eh? Though I have marked that men of your persuasion—bloodshedders for gain—are apt to think themselves immortal by their crimes; they no sooner become unfit to live, than they give up all thoughts of death."

"In the name of the great fiend!" muttered Belleville.

At the same moment De la Jonquille slapt the speaker encouragingly on the shoulder, crying, "Now thou hast it! swear on."

"De la Jonquille! why do you thus torment me?" cried Belleville imploringly.

"Well, well," replied the Marquis, "for the sake of poor humanity, I will respect its qualms, and talk no more of death. Thou shalt live, Belleville, for ever—and that granted, where shall we sup?"

As the Marquis spoke, a low long groan, as from the earth, fixed Belleville to the spot: he griped the arm of his companion, and asked, "Did you hear nothing?"

"Very like Narcisse," was the cool reply; and Belleville, for the moment, more appalled by the unconcern of his friend, who appeared on a sudden removed from the sphere of all human sympathies, than by that which tested it, was about to quit his arm and hurry from him as a demon: another moment, and he grasped him more firmly, as if to lose him was to lose his surest safeguard against every ill. Belleville feared and hated his comrade, whilst with a slavish superstition he could not but consider him the arbiter of his destiny. Again the groan was heard, and Belleville still clutched the arm of the Marquis, who repeated, "Very like Narcisse."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Belleville, "impossible! Said they not he was dead?"

"Hark! eh—what have we here?" and De la Jonquille dragged his companion towards the gateway of a low, massive building; and, at length, discovered through the darkness a man apparently writhing in the agonies of death. "Say, friend, who are ye—and what has brought ye to this plight?"

"If you have Christian hearts, a priest—a priest," answered the sufferer.

"Good Belleville," cried the Marquis, "I pray ye, run for some holy man. Hark! who comes?"

At this moment, several forms were seen to move slowly and cautiously towards the spot, and the Marquis and Belleville, standing far in the gateway, observed, unnoticed, the approach of the new comers; four of whom bore apparently a heavy burden on their shoulders.

"*Benedicite!*" exclaimed De la Jonquille, as the men reached the gateway. They suddenly paused, and the voice of Father George responded "*Benedicite!*" On this the Friar, motioning his followers, hastened his steps, when a louder "*Benedicite!*" from De la Jonquille made him stop.

"Who is there?" asked the Friar.

"A dying sinner, Father George," answered De la Jonquille.

"It *is* the Monk!" exclaimed Belleville. "I pray ye, let him pass."

"And leave a dying man unshriven? Fie upon you, Belleville!" said the Marquis, who again addressed himself to the Monk. Father George, having whispered to his followers, they proceeded on with their load, leaving him to perform his ghostly office on the dying man.

"As I live," cried the Friar, "the gentleman with whom I had such goodly talk in the prison!—and who is here? Nay, tarry a moment;" and the Monk, winged with good intentions, flew towards his companions, already arrived at their destination, and in a few moments—they had deposited their load within—returned with them to the Marquis, who earnestly prayed the Friar to give his speedy consolation to an expiring sinner. By the orders of the Monk, the wounded man was borne onward in the arms of the men, when Father George entreated the Marquis and Belleville to give him their company beneath his humble roof.

"Thanks! many thanks, kind Father!" answered Belleville, "but we have business—urgent business."

"Trust me, no," interrupted De la Jonquille; "at least no affairs that should not give way to hospitality so holy—so we follow, excellent Father;" and Belleville found himself compelled to yield to the Marquis, who whispered to him, "there might be danger did we appear to suspect."

"Suspect! What have we to fear of him?" asked Belleville.

"Halters—halters, nothing more; hush!" and De la Jonquille significantly pressed the arm of Belleville. "A sweet retreat," observed the Marquis, as Father George showed his guests beyond the first gate of the house of the Carmelites. "A charming school for saints, i' faith!"

"Thus far you may enter," said Father George; and as he spoke the gate was closed behind them.

"We are trapped," whispered Belleville.

"Ay, Carmelites for life," answered the Marquis. "Well, with all my heart! what say ye?" Belleville, confounded, sick at heart with the banter of his companion, bit his lip, and answering not, groaned inwardly.

"Sit, and what the house affords, that shall ye partake of," said Father George, who departed, leaving his guests to indulge in their anticipations of a Carmelite repast. In a few minutes, Father George returned, attended by a brother, who laid a large black loaf upon the table, and then placed beside it a pitcher of water.

"Eat, and may it profit ye!" said Father George, stretching his hands above the banquet. De la Jonquille seized a knife, and, with the air of a man determined to make a hearty meal, cut a large slice from the loaf.

"And is this," said the Marquis, "is this the fare of the saints? I marvel not they look so beautiful. Delicious!" he added, chewing the bread, and winking at Belleville. "Exquisite! it tastes of good men's prayers—of the grateful tears of the widow—of the balmy sighs of the orphan—ha! this is bread, indeed! Who, having once filled himself with this, can find flavour in the cakes of the naughty world, without? Do you feed cardinals on this?" asked De la Jonquille, turning a black crust between his finger and thumb. "Is the Pope made infallible by such luscious fare?"

"Who would question it!" observed Father George, evading a direct reply.

"Ha! ha!" and the Marquis poured the water into a wooden cup. "I never saw water until now! How it sparkles and bubbles! And is it this divine liquid that paints the cheeks, and sometimes the nose of the Church? Is it this that gives bloom to the Abbots—that makes your Priors rosy? 'Tis a marvellous liquor, *if* it do these things."

"It is," answered the Friar.

"Come, man, eat and drink," cried De la Jonquille, and he pressed the black loaf and the water upon Belleville.

"I neither hunger nor thirst," observed Belleville; "but I would fain to bed."

"Eat and drink of these, and they will bring appetite: is't not so, holy priest? By the belly of Silenus, if so profane a vow may be spoken here, the water is bright—bright as"—and the Marquis leered at Belleville—"diamonds."

"Will ye stay all night?" asked the Chevalier impatiently, and started to his feet.

"True—I lose time," answered the Marquis, "and so, now to business. We would fain confess to ye, most worthy Father"——

"Confess!" cried Belleville: "confess—what?"

"All our sins," continued De la Jonquille; "and having done so, beg of ye permission to enter your holy order, and live and die most reverend Carmelites."

"Is this a place—is this a theme for banter?" asked Belleville.

"No," replied De la Jonquille, and he raised his eyes towards the roof, and placed his hand upon his heart.

"If thou hast aught to confess," said Father George, "follow me."

"Nay, not so," replied the Marquis. "The Chevalier and myself have had our peccadilloes, as we have had our pleasures, in common; so 'twill save time, if we confess together."

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Belleville. "Let us begone! Are you mad?"

"No—not mad, but contrite," answered De la Jonquille with looks and voice that staggered his companion. "Would he really confess?" thought Belleville, and he shuddered at the supposition.

"Confess, then," cried the Monk: "but, as for admission into our holy brotherhood"——

"Nay, we come not empty-handed," said De la Jonquille; "we have that which shall enrich the common stock, devoted as it is to acts of charity and goodness; we come not without a few crowns; and, moreover, look ye, we have this"—and with these words, the Marquis plucked from his bosom, and flung upon the table, the diamond bracelet—the cause of the murder of the Jew, the murder of poor Narcisse, and the imprisonment of the innocent De Loire. Had it been a deadly snake, Belleville could not have started with greater terror—could not have betrayed more agony of heart. "They are real, I pledge my honour," said the unmoved Marquis, "real."

The Capuchin turned the bracelet in his hand, and a smile of grim satisfaction lurked at his lip, as, with his eye fixed searchingly on De la Jonquille, he asked, "And how obtained?"

"So—so! The church is become a rare catechist," cried De la Jonquille. "How obtained?"

"How obtained?" coolly reiterated the Capuchin.

"'Tis the free offering of penitents—and is not that enough?" asked De la Jonquille. "Nay," he added, staring at the terrified

Belleville, "I am tired of this life of useless pleasure—this barren and monotonous round of worldly delights—and yearn for black bread, pure water, and a hair shirt."

"Farewell, then," exclaimed Belleville, "choose for thyself. Father, bid them unlock the gate;" and the Chevalier, pale and trembling, stood at the door.

"Tarry a little—but a little, good son," answered the Friar; and he hastily quitted his visitors, taking the bracelet with him, and carefully bolting the door without.

"Fool!—wretch!—villain!" cried Belleville in a paroxysm of passion, shaking his clenched hand in the unmoved face of De la Jonquille.

"My good friend, my present patience shall best testify my altered state. I will take thy reproofs, and pray for thy amendment," said the Marquis.

"Pray for thine own damned soul," exclaimed Belleville, and drawing his sword, he thrust furiously at the Marquis, who retreating against the wall, the door of a small ante-room was burst open, discovering therein a coffin.

"Would ye fight, and before such a witness?" asked De la Jonquille, pointing to the bier.

Belleville reeled backward, and his sword dropped from his hand. "Who is there?" he gasped.

"Poor Narcisse!" sighed the Marquis, and was about to remove the lid, when Belleville darted upon him, and gibbering inarticulate sounds, dragged him from the spot, and dashed to the door. Overcome by terror, he sank speechless into a chair, hiding his face in his hands. Thus he sat for some moments; and when he ventured to look around, he found himself alone! De la Jonquille was gone. He was alone with his second victim; the poor, racked, murdered wretch, the victim of his own fidelity and the guilt and cowardice of his master. He did not dare to look towards the door which closed upon the body; and yet he thought he heard whisperings bidding him look—almost felt the near approach of some gigantic hand about to force him to look—felt that the victim himself stood there beckoning with his finger, inviting him to look!

The door opened, and Belleville rose with a shriek, then falling huddled up at the foot of the unseen Friar, cried and moaned for mercy.

"Where is thy friend?" asked Father George, taking no notice of the condition of Belleville, who, assured by the Monk's voice, rose from the earth.

"Demon!—devil!" groaned Belleville.

"Not so; for he has the seeds of repentance," said the Monk. "May I depart?" repeated Belleville, furiously, taking no heed of the question of the Monk.

"Ay, and as thou shalt deserve them," answered the Friar, "may the blessings of the good go with thee. That way will lead thee to the outer gate," and the Monk pointed to the door of the antechamber.

"Not that way—not that way," exclaimed Belleville, and he recoiled from the spot with looks of horror and disgust. "I—I pray ye, some other outlet, I could not pass it."

"Nay, thou hast seen him living—hast talked to him—a poor, foolish, wicked boy! come give me thy hand, I'll lead thee through the passage." Saying this, the Monk grasped the hand of Belleville, who weak as infancy, suffered himself to be led towards the door. It was opened by the Monk, who, approaching the coffin, laid the diamond bracelet upon it. Belleville cast in the unmoved face of Father George, a look of supplicating anguish: then, with clasped hands, sank, almost insensible, at the foot of the bier.

"Rupert, the woodman—Chevalier Belleville!" said the Monk, in a stern, accusing voice, "before the ashes of thy victim, I conjure thee to confess, and to repent."

"Confess!" exclaimed a voice, and Belleville shrank at the sound, and gnashed his teeth in agony. "Confess!" again conjured the unseen speaker.

"Oh, God! 'tis he!" cried Belleville; and he fell senseless upon the stone pavement, the blood spirting with the blow from his head and nostrils. Still, the next word of which Belleville was conscious, was "Confess!" That word ran through his brain, and his ears burned with the sound. "Confess—confess!" seemed to reverberate from the roof—the pavement—the walls.

"I will confess,—ask what thou wilt," cried Belleville.

"Who murdered the old man? Who slew Aaron Ezra?" asked Friar George.

"Behold the hand!" answered Belleville, and he lifted it tremblingly towards the Monk.

"And the young Count de Loire is innocent?" questioned the Father.

"Innocent!" replied the culprit.

"And the lackey—the footman—the poor, witless boy, Narcisse?"

"Innocent!" answered Belleville, and the tears gushed as he spoke the word. "I thank God! though murdered for me, innocent."

"And thy wife, Edith—thy noble-hearted wife!" probed the Monk. "Where is she?"

"Ask me not—I know not!" replied Belleville, moodily.

"And thy child—thy sweet daughter, Marie?"

"Mad—mad!" screamed the father, and he leapt to his feet, and for a moment the Monk recoiled in terror from the penitent, whose face was swollen and livid with agony: locking his hands in his hair, he stampt upon the earth, and in the voice of a maniac, screamed "Mad—mad—would to God I were!"

"And thy companion, the Marquis de la Jonquille?"

"Devil—fiend—monster! that has snared me," shouted the wretched man.

"Where is he?" asked the Monk.

"Where is he?" inquired an unseen speaker.

"Dost thou not hear him?" cried Belleville.

"It is thy disordered wit!" answered the Monk; but Belleville shook his head, and groaned. "And this bracelet was stolen?" questioned Father George.

"I won it—in fair—in honourable play of—of that hell-hound, who has destroyed me," replied Belleville.

"And thou hast nothing more to confess—consider, nothing?" asked the Friar.

"Nothing!" answered Belleville. "May I depart?"

"Go! and may peace wait upon thy repentance. Ho! Brother Francis!" and instantly a Monk obeyed the summons of the Friar; "show this man to the gate." The Monk slowly led the way, Belleville following with beating heart. At length the Monk unlocked the gate; the moon shone with purest brightness. Belleville, as he crossed the threshold, turned towards the Monk: when he beheld beneath the cowl of his conductor, the laughing face of De la Jonquille. "Peace wait upon thy repentance!" he cried; and with a crowing laugh, he closed the gate, and Belleville, bleeding and exhausted, fell upon the earth.

CHAPTER XII.

It was deep midnight, when Pierre Grognon—whose vigilance as an humble servant of justice we have already noticed—was heard to thunder at the gate of the house of the Capuchins; the officer having found at the very threshold a gentleman bleeding, and for aught he knew, dying. In due season, the unceremonious summons of the officer was answered by Brother

Francis. A brief discourse passed between the Monk and the man of justice, when the wounded man was immediately carried off by two of the guard; and next morning, the gay Chevalier Belleville found himself a tenant of the prison of Paris—accused of theft and murder.

"And can it be?" asked Jacques Tenebræ. "Is it possible? So, you have confessed?"

"I have confessed nothing," answered Belleville, who still clung to a horrible existence.

"Well, well, 'tisn't for me to question," said the hangman; "but I had my doubts of the guilt of that poor boy."

"Begone!" exclaimed Belleville, "or is it thy duty to attend me here?"

"No, not here—not here," replied Tenebræ: "but we needn't talk of my duty at present. I came as a friend to ye; this is a place where we cannot grow friends, like a dish of salad. Do ye want nothing?"

"Nothing—nothing," answered the prisoner.

"Humph! you want a better pallet at least. That lazy Seraphe! why, the cell has not been cleared since—Ho! Seraphe," and immediately the fellow entered. "Are ye not a pretty villain to eat the bread of the most worshipful city of Paris, yet take no more heed for the comfort of its prisoners?"

"You're too tender for the place, good Master Jacques," answered Seraphe, with a leer, "but what's the matter now?"

"Matter! why hast not cleared up the cell for new company? The gentleman lies on the very straw that poor Narcisse died on."

At these words, Belleville sprang from the pallet as from burning coals. Pacing the narrow precincts of his cell, the prisoner took no further notice of the movements of his gaoler, who now whistling, and now humming a tune, turned anew the straw, and—Jacques Tenebræ having left the cell—contented himself with so slight a ceremony; saying, as he took his leave of Belleville, "'Twill doubtless last your time, most excellent Chevalier."

Days passed, and the next day was the day of trial. Belleville was awakened from a dream to prepare himself for the judge. The wretched prisoner—harassed, worn—slept, and soundly, on the bare flint; his gaoler having refused to change the death-straw of poor Narcisse, and Jacques Tenebræ paying no further visit to the criminal, Seraphe remained the sole master of his charge. Belleville lay dreaming of the old wood, the place of his childhood—his cottage—his wife and children—his foolish faithful boy, Narcisse—and the tyrant, the Lord de Loire passed

in the vision—and again he heard the temptings of the strange spirit in the forest—again he saw his cottage unroofed—his wife and children houseless, starving—again he struggled with Locust—again heard the whisperings of the evil spirit—when the voice of Seraphe roused him from his slumber.

"Yes—yes," cried Belleville, and his head fell upon his breast—"I heard the demon—I followed him—and I am here!"

"Most worthy Chevalier, the court sits early," said Seraphe, who believing the boy Narcisse to have fallen a victim to the ingratitude of his master, took a wayward pleasure in tormenting him—"the court sits early, and 'twould be bad manners, nay, bad policy in you to make them wait, even were they inclined to be so condescending. They might, you know, think of the incivility in the sentence. Eh?"

"Am I wanted now?" asked Belleville, smiling contemptuously.

"If you please," answered the gaoler, bowing with affected deference. "Your coach is ready."

Belleville passed from his dungeon—was received by his guards—and in a brief time, stood arraigned at the bar. There, still fighting for life, the prisoner endeavoured to parry every dangerous question, strove to explain away the circumstances alleged against him—argued, battled with his judges—now treating the accusation as the fruit of a base conspiracy—and now laughing to scorn the feeble malignity of his enemies. The auditory—and there were present many of the noblest men of Paris, many of the fairest women—applauded, admired, and wondered at the capabilities, the courage of the prisoner. Slight murmurs of approbation at times disturbed the serenity of justice—applause awakened by the adroitness or eloquence of the accused. Belleville, for a time, forgot the terrible stake at issue, in self-complacency at the homage paid to his talents: he felt himself an actor playing a part to an admiring crowd, not an arraigned felon pleading for name and life: he saw not the wheel, and the executioner, Jacques Tenebræ; they were lost, forgotten in the bright eyes and balmy lips of the ladies, smiling on the prisoner. Death and shame were unthought of; and the mind and heart of Belleville glowed and throbbed with the glory, the delight of female conquest!

The cause had lasted several hours, and Belleville, assured of triumph, gazed airily about him. He had foiled every testimony brought against him—nothing remained to be adduced. As for his confession to the Monk, the laws of the holy Church made that sacred in the breast of Father George. What, then, had he to fear? At most, a vague suspicion might rest upon his name

—but it was impossible that any means of proof could exist to make manifest his infamy. With these thoughts, Belleville stood gazing at the beautiful faces looking intently upon him, when he felt his garment pulled, and turning, beheld an old woman dressed in black, who, with outstretched finger, pointed to a new witness, whose back was turned towards the prisoner, but whose appearance denoted him to be a peasant. He had already given his name—the name had escaped the ear of Belleville—to the judge, who proceeded to question him. At every answer oi the witness, Belleville shrunk within himself—all was lost—the face of Jacques Tenebræ hideously distorted, swam before the eyes of the prisoner—he was a doomed man!

In brief, the witness professed himself an old companion of the prisoner, when a lowly, happy man. He had worked with him in the same forest; had followed him in his better fortunes to Paris; had entered his service; had attended him at the gaming-table; was with him on the Quai des Orfèvres; nay, more, had assisted him to escape from the hands of justice, when closely pursued at the house of the murdered Jew.

"Prisoner, what answer make you to this?" demanded the Judge.

Belleville was about to reply, when, at the moment, the witness turned and gazed upon him. Belleville beheld the face of De la Jonquille; and horror-stricken, yet sufficiently possessed to answer, replied, "No answer—none; I can die."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shrieked the old woman, who had directed the attention of Belleville to the fatal witness, "death — death!"

"Peace!" exclaimed the Judge. "Who is that?"

"The widowed mother of the murdered Laval!" cried the woman, casting for a moment her load of years, and standing erect before the Judge. "The blood of my boy—my only boy, is upon him!" and she pointed to Belleville, "justice hath found the slayer! Death—death—death!" she exclaimed, and the hearts of the auditory quailed at the shrill, piercing note of the childless widow. She sat down, with her eye immediately fixed upon the face of the culprit, who felt relieved by the sentence of the Judge—albeit it doomed the murderer to a cruel death—for it rescued him from the torturing stare of the mother of his victim.

"Well, Chevalier," said Seraphe, as the prisoner re-entered his dungeon, "for to-night, at least, you shall have clean straw; you should sleep soundly to-night, for, by the saints, you'll have a rough day's work to-morrow."

"Reptile!" exclaimed Belleville, "but, no—I can pity, endure even thee. Begone!"

The prisoner remained but a short time undisturbed. "The most holy Father George!" said Seraphe, "thou wilt see him, doubtless?" Belleville answered not; when the gaoler, with a contemptuous growl, retired, and almost immediately the friar entered the dungeon.

"Peace be with ye!" cried the Monk.

"Amen!" responded the culprit. "Where—where is the—the Marquis?"

"Think not of him," answered the Friar, "consider thy precious soul."

"He has snared it—damned it," exclaimed Belleville in the wildest agony.

"Thou wilt confess?" asked the Father.

"I have confessed!" cried Belleville. "If you have one touch of Christian charity, leave me. I have confessed; leave me."

"To-morrow early, I will attend thee," said the Priest.

"To-morrow!" groaned Belleville, and he writhed amidst his straw. The priest quitted the dungeon, and a sister of charity, attended by a youthful female form, closely veiled, entered the cell.

"Peace be here!" cried the holy sister.

"Art thou not gone? Leave me!" cried Belleville; in his misery not distinguishing the voice of the woman from that of the Monk. The sister replied not, but, with her companion, stood silent and apart in a corner of the cell. "Edith! Edith!" cried the prisoner, in bitterest remorse,—"Why, why did I close mine ears—why turn from thy true counsel? ''Twill end in wretchedness—in death!' Such were thy words—and death will find me—Oh God! to-morrow, he will come to me—in blood and anguish on the wheel—amidst the hootings and the curses, and the laughter of the mob—death like a fiend, will come upon me—delivering me to fiends eternal. Edith! Edith! where art thou?"

"Rupert!" cried the woman, and the sister of charity, the faithful Edith, knelt beside the straw of her murderer husband.

"So, so," cried the wretched man, "thou hast come—in kindness come, to see me die."

"Thy death is certain," answered Edith. "Heed it not—a passing pang."

"The shame—the ignominy—the crowd——"

"Rupert—Rupert! there is a greater crowd that view the evil which we think and do—a crowd outnumbering the multi-

tudes of earth. Thou hast planned and acted sin, with myriads of God's angels beholding thee—and dost thou fear the looks of men, vain eyes of clay?"

"It were happiness to die, and die thy hand in mine—but to die—oh! thou canst not think the horror."

"School thy heart, in the few hours left thee upon earth—such hours, in which are quickened the wisdom and the worth of years—school thy heart, and thou wilt pass to death as to thy rest, without a thought, a knowledge of the horrors that strew thy path."

"Thou hast not heard my sentence—thou dost not know," exclaimed the husband.

"I have heard—I know," answered the wife, "and I have counselled thee."

"And with that placid face—with voice so passionless—and eyes without a tear?"

"Rupert, the heart may be wrung and bleed the most—the words of peace be killing to the speaker—the eyestrings crack—and yet the lip shall quiver not, and as thou sayest, the eyes be tearless."

"Forgive me Edith—forgive me—in my last hours—my ignorance of thy true nature—my littleness—my weakness, forgive me all, and pray for me."

"And with thee!"

"Not with me—for I cannot pray. I have been a wronged, an outraged man; the iron heel of tyranny crushed from my heart the seeds of goodness, and from that hour did I become a monster and a wretch. I was wont to pray—thou knowest it—in our cottage, with our—our"— and Rupert gazed wildly in the face of his wife; then turning from her, muttered, "Thou knowest what I would ask, yet dare not!"

"Marie," answered the wife.

"Ay!" groaned Rupert.

"She is come," said Edith, "come to take your blessing;" and when the prisoner turned, he beheld, kneeling at his side, his forlorn daughter.

"And I—I have killed her mind," cried the wretched father. "Is't not so?"

"Marie is better—much better," said her mother.

The father grasped the hands of his child, gazed earnestly in her face, then cried, "No! dead—dead!" and burst into tears.

"Why do you cry—why weep?" asked Marie. "I have been ill; sick—most sick—but I am well now."

"And still—still beautiful!" cried Belleville, as shuddering he ventured again to look upon her.

"She begged to come—she hath talked of you—she told me"——

"What! She knows, then?" asked Rupert. "She is cursed with sense enough to know the wretch—the monster that I am?"

"No! She knew that you were ill—were dying; she had dreamt you were—and prayed to come to you! She said you must, and should bless her!"

Rupert raised himself—and, laying his hand upon his daughter's head, his throat worked convulsively, but he could not speak. Franticly flinging himself down, he cried, "I cannot do it! I!—a murderer—bless! The devils laugh at me—I cannot do it!"

"Bless me, father!" said Marie, still kneeling.

"Rupert!" cried Edith, in a voice of appealing tenderness—"Rupert!"

"Bless me, father!" said the girl, "and I—I will pray for thee, for thou art dying!"

"How knowest thou, my sweet Marie—how knowest thou that?" asked Rupert.

The girl looked in her father's face, mournfully shook her head, then replied, "I'm sure of it!"

"But how art thou sure?—why art thou sure?" inquired the father, who tried to smile as he caressed the girl, passing his hand across her brow and down her hair.

"Your flesh looks not living flesh—your breath is not as the breath of life—your words come as from the grave, whereto you speed! So bless me, father!—bless me!"

"But thou hast dreamt this, Marie? Thou hast seen, as in a vision, that thy father was dying? Is it not so?" asked Rupert.

"Ay, a bright vision; and it was told me that thou wert going to the judgment!"

The face of Rupert became livid—the sweat rolled from his temples—and, as he grasped the straw, the muscles of his hands swelled with the agony he strove to master.

"I was told it," repeated the girl, unconscious of the misery she inflicted.

"And who"—gasped the father—"who told thee?"

"Who should tell me? Who, except my mother, should now tell me anything? Who—for thou hast been long from us—who should bring news to Marie now?"

"Yet somebody, thou sayest, told thee," said the father.

"Truly, truly," answered Marie, quickly. "And canst thou not guess?"

"No, Marie; no!"

"Thou canst not? Who should it be, if not my true, my only love?"——

"Thy only love, Marie?"

"Antoine Laval," sighed the heart-broken maid; and her father, his murderer, exclaiming "Edith—take her hence," sank in his straw, and was again alone in his dungeon.

CHAPTER XIII.

The next day was a holiday for thousands in Paris; a culprit was to be broken on the wheel; and, on the morning that brought anguish and death to one miserable wretch, thousands of his fellow-men rose and prepared themselves as for a festival. Hundreds talked, and laughed as they talked, of the coming ceremony, and hurried to the spot. Of the thousands who crowded to the place of execution, how many, by their words or looks, revealed a sense of the horror they flocked to witness! How many left for a time, the occupation of the day, to see and be instructed by the executioner! To take away with them a terrible example—to have their hearts and minds impressed anew with hatred of evil, and love of good—to be warned from wickedness by the shrieks and blood of the wicked! Many laughed and jested on their road to the spot—some, whilst the culprit screamed and writhed, would feel a touch of pity for his sufferings, his guilt forgotten in his agonies; and the malefactor dead, the beholders would return to their homes, many shocked by the operation of the law—and more, hardened against it. The execution of Rupert was the fête-day of death to thousands in Paris, who rose with no other thought, no other aim for the morning, than that of making holiday.

"Ha! ha! neighbour Philippot," cried a small shopkeeper, as with running feet, he came up with an old man of his own class, "I thought you wouldn't miss the show."

"I never missed one yet, Master Paul—never, as I'm an honest man," answered the complacent Philippot.

"And is it like to be worth the seeing?" asked Paul. "Is he a stout fellow, or a poor thing like the last?"

"I hear, a brave, bold rascal," said the sight-seer; "but the wheel will show. I have known many a knave mount the scaffold, snapping his fingers, and with a grin upon his cheek—who, at the first crack of the wheel"——

"Ha! that must try a man indeed, my master," said Paul, seriously.

"I believe ye; and it does me good—stirs me a bit—to see how some suffer it; not a squeak—not a groan—not a sigh—will escape 'em! Fellows with nerves of steel and hearts of gold," said old Philippot. "I recollect such a one at Cologne; I was then scarce eighteen,—he was racked for a murder; and, as for racking now, compared to that, 'tis mere child's play. Then, the executioner had his redhot pincers, and his molten lead—his slashing knife, and I know not what to help him, when the truth was to be pulled out of a culprit."

"And this man—this murderer—did he confess?" asked Paul.

"Not a syllable. Ha! that was, indeed, a sight to see. I recollect it, as it were but yesterday. First, my gentleman was brought out of the gaol, naked to the girdle; and being bound fast on high in a cart, that we might all have a fair sight of him; the hangman, having a pan of coals near him, with redhot pincers, nipped"——

"Ugh!" exclaimed Paul, shuddering at the recital.

"With redhot pincers," repeated the unmoved Philippot, "nipped"——

"For God's sake, speak no further of it! I would not have seen that sight for"—

"No!" cried Philippot: "then what makes you out to-day, if you're so squeamish?"

"Nay, we're not such heathens as to use such torments," said Paul. "The wheel is well enough—is necessary for the protection of honest folks; but to use pincers, and such devil's inventions, is unseemly among Christian men. But tell me, did the poor creature confess?"

"Why, that was the ugly part of it," answered Philippot; "for, after he had been racked, and served as I never saw flesh served before or since—why, what do you think? the poor wretch was found to be innocent? The true murderer couldn't rest with the blood upon him—confessed all—and I saw him racked too. A plague upon your gossip! What a mob!" cried the dissatisfied old man, as abruptly turning a corner they came upon the place of execution, already thronged with thousands. "There's no getting a place near, Jacques, and my eyes ar'n't what they used to be," said Philippot, disappointed; and vainly trying to espy an opening in the crowd, through which he might be able to get nearer to the scaffold.

"They'll never rack him," said one of the mob, "not they, that wheel's only to gull us; he's one of the gentry. You'll see how, at the last minute, a message will come with royal mercy,

to chop off his head, and so cheat us of half—nay, of the best part of the sight."

"If I'd ha' thought as much, I'd never have lost a morning's work to come here," said a second.

"No—nor would I have stayed here to get a place, all the night; and then, at the last minute, too, when I'd fixed myself so nicely, to be driven away by the soldiers! You really think," asked the speaker, with an air of much anxiety, "you really think they won't put him to the wheel?"

"I'll bet a crown they won't," replied the man appealed to.

"I'll take that bet," exclaimed another.

"Agreed—it's good? it's—hush—ha! here they come." And the sudden silence of the mob—a silence, succeeded by a slight murmur—gave notice of the appearance of the procession.

"Where did he come from?" exclaimed one of the crowd, as Jacques Tenebræ suddenly appeared upon the scaffold.

"He wasn't dropt from the sky, depend upon it," answered another.

"Peace—silence—hush!" and again the crowd stood almost breathless as one man.

Rupert, preceded and followed by guards, with his arms bound, his feet naked and his head uncovered, walked slowly yet firmly, to the scaffold; his eyes upon the earth; his lips moving; and Father George, the Capuchin, whispering at his ear.

"A fine fellow," said Paul, "a noble-looking fellow."

"Humph! my life for it, man," said Philippot, the gray-haired critic of the performances of the scaffold, "my life for it, he'll yell at the first pinch; I can see it by his lip."

Rupert mounted the scaffold; and though Jacques Tenebræ seemed as he would fain avoid the gaze of the culprit, yet Rupert looked upon him, sighed "Poor Narcisse! thou art avenged," and then faintly smiled.

"Ha! I've known them laugh before, who screamed the hardest afterwards," muttered Philippot, unwilling to lose faith in his own discrimination: "we shall see."

Jacques approached Rupert, and the buzz that began to rise among the crowd at the motion of the executioner immediately subsided: not a breath was heard.

"He doesn't quiver yet," whispered Philippot, incapable of suppressing his disappointment.

At this moment Jacques laid his hand upon the culprit, and motioned one of the assistants towards him: as the fellow approached the criminal, Rupert started back, and trembled from head to foot.

"I knew it! now he winces—now he shakes!" and Philippot rubbed his hands.

"You—you here!" shouted the culprit; for, in his agony, he saw in the hangman's assistant the malicious face of De la Jonquille; who, with his customary smile, nodded; then stretched his finger towards the crowd. The eye of Rupert unconsciously followed its motion, when he beheld but a few yards from the scaffold, the forms of old Aaron Ezra and young Antoine Laval. They, his victims, seemed risen from the dead to witness his last agonies, making them more horrible by the satisfaction, the triumph that glistened in their corpse-white faces.

"Quick—quick!" cried Rupert, "for the love of mercy!"

"Be patient," whispered Father George.

"Now—now, Jacques,—now!" exclaimed the culprit; and the crowd screamed and shouted, wrought upon by the intense passion of the criminal.

"Now, Jacques—now!" bellowed the multitude, sympathising with the sufferer.

"Now—now!" exclaimed two voices.

"You hear them—you see them, Father!" shrieked Rupert to the monk, and he pointed where, in his imagination, stood the Jew and the youth; but, not daring again to look, fell into the arms of the monk.

"Heaven receive ye!" said Father George, and blessing the criminal for the last time, he delivered him into the hands of the executioner, and his assistants gathered about him, to receive him.

"Ha! ha! I win my wager! no pardon—the wheel—the wheel!" Such was the shout of triumph from one of the mob, as Rupert received the first blow.

"He doesn't shrink yet," said Philippot.

"Nor yet," said a near companion, as the blow was repeated.

"Nor yet," remarked a third.

"Eh? Yes—no!—firm as a rock still!" cried another; and thus did numbers of the crowd, habituated to scenes of lingering death, coldly gaze upon and calculate the sufferings of a fellow-creature.

"Is he dead?" asked one.

"He must be," was the answer.

"Dead! Nonsense!" observed Philippot: "we shall hear him yet—though, to give him his due, he has put a stouter face upon it than I—eh?—he can't be dead!" cried the old man impatiently.

"Dead enough—another crown upon it!"

"Be it so. He—he moves!"

At this moment the wretched malefactor uttered an awful shriek.

"Not dead—I win!" cried Philippot. "See! now for the *coup-de-grace*."

Jacques Tenebræ lifted the weapon, which, descending on the miserable Rupert——

CHAPTER XIV.

"Eight," said the old man.

"Nine," cried Ernest.

"Ten!"

"Eleven!"

"Twelve!"

"Ernest—ho!—Mercy!"—cried their master, waking as from a hideous dream.

"My lord!" answered the youth.

"It was a vision! Thank God!" cried the domestic tyrant, and falling upon his knees, he prayed, an altered man. "Where's Rupert, the woodman?"

"Below, my lord, come here to beg your mercy."

"He has not been driven from the forest? I dreamt my orders were obeyed—that I myself was made that houseless, hopeless wretch, the victim of my own sentence—that I had fallen step by step, until at length upon the murderer's wheel—Oh, God!—that vision! Yet has it profited me—has taught me that to deal mercifully with our fellow-men, and thereby, in their day of destitution, to preserve them from the temptations of evil, is to fulfil the prime duty of our existence—to carry out the first and the greatest Lesson of Life!"

PERDITUS MUTTON;

WHO BOUGHT A CAUL.

CHAPTER I.

PERDITUS MUTTON sat in his solitary chamber, with serious eyes bent upon the "London Post"—the journal of the day; the day being the fifth of November, in the year of our regeneration, seventeen hundred and sixty.

"A CHILD'S CAUL.

"To be disposed of, a CHILD'S CAUL: price five guineas. Apply to Miriam Birdseye, Hog Lane, Shoreditch."

Such, reader, were the golden tidings suddenly beaming on the delighted orbs of Perditus Mutton. Now, be it known, that Perditus Mutton had long thought to become a voyager. He had read the marvels of Mandeville and Purchas—of Hakluyt and Coryate; and he had no wife to hold him in her white arms—no children to tug at his coat-skirts—no fireside gods to fix him at his hearth. He would therefore cross the perilous sea: he would, with his proper ears, listen to the singing of the mermaids; and, sauntering on Asiatic plains, with his own eyes behold the grazing unicorns. All here was dull, cold, faded—all there was luscious, genial, radiant. Perditus had brought an unsuspecting mind—a credulous heart—to the narrations of his darling travellers; they had been to him oracles of truth; their wonders dwelt in his brain, writ with an iron pen in rock. He had given himself a bondsman to those high-priests of fairyland, the old travellers; the grave tellers of unknown glories; the dreamers, *cum privilegio*, of rosy dreams. Rare Marco Polo—glorious Mendez Pinto! authorised necromancers — lawful magicians — makers of innocent griffins — guileless dragons!

Men, who have seen the phœnix waste in her odoriferous nest, and have watched the birth of the young pullet!

Yes, to Perditus Mutton, the old traveller was truth itself on a pilgrimage. Perditus had sworn fealty to the happy man who had heard the Syrens sing—who had beheld armies of pigmies mounted on cranes—who had known the ostrich to hatch her eggs by the heat of her eyes—who had seen a king stared to death by a basilisk—a porcupine transfix a roaring lion by a quill shot dexterously through and through its heart. He would have travelled round the globe to kiss the feet of the good Bishop Pontoppidan, the worthy ecclesiastic, who, musing on the coast of Norway, did behold a merman rise from the sea, who sang for two hours "and more." For a long time Perditus had determined upon setting forth a traveller. Yet, in his highest hopes, he would feel a pang that brought him to the earth again. England was, unhappily, an island; and qualms came upon his heart as he thought of the weltering main. At least three times a year, for ten years past, had he dreamt of storm and shipwreck, and had awakened with the sea gurgling in his wind-pipe—singing in his ears. "A child's caul! five guineas!" He would straightway go to Hog Lane, Shoreditch, and so defy even destiny. That he had never before thought of that amulet against sinking, seemed to him more than an accident. It was evident that his evil genius—that morning happily off its guard—had all along left him insensible of the human virtues, the tried and approved qualities of a caul. He had, however, at length triumphed over the enemy, and he would lose no time in seeking the treasure.

Perditus rose and approached the window; the rain came in torrents from a brown-paper coloured sky, and although Perditus looked from the third story of the house of a pains-taking barber in the Strand, he could see no coach. He turned upon his heel, and one step brought him to the fireplace. He had resolved to defer his journey to Hog Lane until fairer weather, when looking up, his eye rested on, we fear, an apocryphal likeness of Prester John. As he gazed, Mutton thought he beheld the awful brows of the mysterious potentate knit in condemnation of delay:—there would, doubtless, be many bidders for the caul—he felt ashamed of his effeminacy—he took his hat—his old roquelaure—and descended into the deluge.

Now is, we think, the time to say a few words in description of our adventurous hero. He had not a relative in the world: he inherited eighty pounds a-year from an aunt who had brought him up almost from infancy; and, at the time of our story, he was a bachelor of two-and-thirty; though from a premature

baldness, and certain natural scarlet streaks about his visage, a jury of matrons would, doubtless, have found him guilty of upwards of two score. His face was not expressive of the sterner passions; indeed, Perditus Mutton, once peering his hooked nose from out his narrow casement into the street below, had by an indecent passenger been likened to a huge turkey looking from a coop for his dinner.

For his moral man, it was distinguished by extreme credulity and more than even womanly gentleness. Frugal and sober, he was quoted as a proverb to the riotous and intemperate. Often have the neighbours exclaimed to Mrs. Beard, wife of Nathaniel Beard, the barber, that she "was blessed in such a lodger." The gossips gave Perditus no more than his due; mice might have been heard in the house, but not Mutton. And was this a man —we think we hear our readers exclaim—to travel? This a man to make his way among the Anthropophagi! But how often do we meet with such afflicting contradictions!

Perditus walked manfully on, and received it as a happy omen that he was scarcely wet to the skin when the rain ceased. There were now fifty coaches; but no, he would walk himself dry: with this determination, he strode onward. The rain had discontinued; but it was November, and a good substantial fog, thick as a wool-pack, descended upon the city. Perditus felt his way through the mist, and though blinded and well nigh suffocated by the fetid vapours, the torches of the link-boys were to his imagination the fire-flies of Hindostan, and he snuffed the gales from the Moluccas. His heart was in the East as he struggled on towards Shoreditch.

Perditus, with all the unconquerable energy of an early traveller, had reached Cheapside. He had thought it impossible that the fog could increase; he had very ignorantly undervalued its capabilities. He stood still and gasped. "A link," cried a child in a piping voice—"a link, your honour?" and by the yellow flare of the link, Perditus saw two rolling black eyes, and the grinning mouth of a boy, who seemed like a little imp to revel in the mire, the stench, and darkness about him. "A link, your honour!" he crowed shrilly for the third time, and cut a caper in the air, and shook his torch, and whooped his delight. Perditus was confounded by the savage enjoyment of the little leaper.

"My dear," said Mutton—and he would have used the same words had he addressed a baboon—"my dear," he repeated in his voice of one note—"my dear," and he coughed until he was almost strangled by the fog.

"They call me Pups," said the boy, with a sneering impa-

tience of Mutton's tenderness. "Pups!" and again he jumped and waved his torch.

"Do you know the way to Shoreditch, my dear?" asked Perditus.

"Go it backwards and sideways, which way you will," said the accommodating Pups.

"An extraordinary child," thought Mutton. "Go on, my dear;" and Mutton walked on, the boy rocking from side to side, and dancing short steps before him. "What's your father, my dear?" asked Perditus, after a little pause.

"Can't tell," said Pups; and he began to whistle like a canary.

"Can't tell? Why, what is his business?—what does he at present do, eh! my dear?" and Mutton spoke quite caressingly.

"Couldn't take it on myself to say," answered Pups.

"Why not, my child?"

"Father's dead," replied Pups: and again he burst into full whistle, and danced with new vivacity. A slight tremor shook the tender Perditus at the filial indifference of young Pups. "Poor little fellow! perhaps, like myself, he never knew the blessing of a father." Such was the charity of our hero. "And how do you get your bread?"

"Why, I picks it up in winter in the fogs: only there arn't such fogs now as there used to be; when my grandmother was a little one, there was a fog of three weeks; but some folks you know is born to luck. That was the time, she says: there warn't a gentleman who wouldn't been ashamed to own he hadn't lost a watch—it was *so* dark."

Mutton instinctively put his hand to his watch-chain, and then meekly observed, "Indeed?"

"But now, business isn't worth doing. The navy ruins us link-boys," said Pups despondingly.

"The navy, my boy! Why how?" inquired Mutton.

"So many ships—makes pitch so dear. And then hemp goes up every day," complained the urchin.

"Really; and do you know the reason of that, my love?"

"A friend of mine says 'cause the sessions get so heavy. If things goes on in this manner, we must take to wax candles."

"Do you know Hog Lane, Shoreditch, my dear?" asked Mutton.

"'Specially at dinner-time," answered Pups; and again he danced as at the recollection of that happy hour.

"Why at dinner-time?" inquired Perditus. "You don't live there?"

"No—only takes my meals: I lives at the West-end. Do you want to go to Hog Lane?"

"That is my destination; I hope you know the right road?"

"If I was blind, I could tell it by the feel of the mud," said the unerring guide; and there was a pause of some minutes, Mutton musing on the desolate lot of little Pups, and little Pups casting backward glances at Mutton's watch-chain.

"Do you know a woman in Hog Lane called Birdseye?" asked Mutton.

"Many years," was the brief reply.

"Many years!—why, you haven't many, my dear?"

"Can't help that—but she's my grandmother."

"Your grandmother?"

"And here's her house," said young Pups, halting, with Perditus Mutton, before a hovel, the abode of Miriam Birdseye, possessor of the caul. Mutton was about to knock at the door, when Pups stood before it, and lowering his torch, that the light might fall with full effect upon his open palm, looked speakingly up in the face of Mutton. "We mayn't meet again, your honour," said Pups; whereupon Mutton, drawing sixpence from his pocket, with a pitying sigh for the forlorn state of the ragged, shoeless urchin, laid the coin in his hand, and was about to enhance the gift with wise and kind advice, when the sagacious young one bit the silver with his teeth, winked a knowing approval of its metallic flavour, and instantly vanished. Mutton looked around him; all was dark. He raised his knuckles to smite the door, but stood with lifted hand, made motionless by a cracked voice, half-chanting, half-preaching, within. He listened, but could distinguish no words; and then suddenly the sound ceased. Was he at the threshold of some wicked beldam—some squalid witch anointing for "the sabbath?" He heard footsteps: no, it was his own heart thumping in the darkness. He was for again plunging into the fog, when he was fixed to the threshold by an inquiry from the cabin. "Who's there?" was asked, as Mutton thought, in hospitable tones, and ere he could reply the door was opened.

CHAPTER II.

"Come in," said a little old woman. "As well as I can see, you look a gentleman; come in." Mutton, encouraged by the civility paid to his appearance, entered the wretched hovel. A fire burned redly on the hearth, and a rushlight flickered through the gloom. "Take a seat, sir;" and the old woman handed to Perditus a bottomless chair. Mutton obediently seated himself within the frame, and put his hat upon the ground. As he sat, his face was quite on a level with the face of the old woman standing before him. Perditus never looked more rosy; his face, shone upon by the flame, glowed like the cheeks of a mandril: the countenance of the old woman was pale as meal; and there was a lustre in her full black eye, which made our hero wince as he met it. "She has seen better days," thought Perditus, as the old dame, like a dwarf queen, stood composedly before him. There was silence for a minute, each party scrutinising the appearance of the other.

Mutton, shifting in his uneasy seat, said, at length, "I read the 'London Post.'"

The old woman, with a comprehensive gesture, but without a word, quitted Perditus, going behind a curtain that hung midway across the hovel. Our hero looked anxiously around. Had the old woman been chanting, talking to herself? There was not even a cat upon the hearth. The woman came from behind the curtain. She approached Perditus, and placing a small packet in his hand, said—"Five guineas."

"It can be warranted?" asked Mutton, as he unwrapt the treasure from its many coverings.

"It's very cheap," remarked the woman, disdaining to meet a doubt of its purity.

Mutton again wrapped up his prize, put it in his pocket, and took out his purse. "One—two—three—four—five," and Mutton counted the guineas into the lean hand of the old woman. As he gave the last guinea, there was a knocking at the door. In an instant, a tall, spare man, with grisly hair, and clay-coloured face, entered the hut.

"How is it to be?" asked the visitor of the old woman, taking no more notice of Mutton than of the bottomless chair he had just quitted. "How is it to be?" The old woman, raising her finger, glided behind the curtain, and was followed by the

stranger. Perditus heard whispering, and then, as he thought, the tinkling of money. The woman and man again appeared. "Remember, everything the best," said the old woman; and the man, doggedly nodding assent, without a word, departed. The woman held the door open, and looked at Perditus Mutton: our hero took his hat, and with a new spirit, quitted the hut, carrying with him the purchased caul.

Now Mutton had been remarkable, among his other virtues, for the gravity of his walk. The statue of Don Guzman had not a more regular, a more majestic gait. How strange then did it appear even unto himself, that he should caper down Hog Lane with the unseemly agility of a morris-dancer! It appeared to him that he had lost the command of his members; for, spite of himself, he still went toe-and-heeling it down the lane, snapping his fingers, and, to his own astonishment, essaying fragments of song by no means naturalised in good society! It was very strange—extremely strange; and yet there was a fascination in the license not altogether unpleasing. At length, behold Mutton in Cheapside; and the fog that had somewhat cleared off, was again congregating its pestilent vapours. A man with a lighted torch approached our hero. "Do you want a link, your honour?"

"You be ——!" exclaimed Mutton, and, to his own surprise, dealt a half-playful blow upon the hat of the querist—a blow that sent the rim of his beaver down to his neck. Having accomplished this, Mutton chuckled and capered, despite a latent sense of the impropriety of the feat. As Mutton entered St. Paul's Churchyard, he became unusually grave; with every step, a deeper sadness came upon him. Was he overcome by a contemplation of the works of man as triumphantly displayed in the cathedral? Did his spirit pay instinctive homage to the genius of Sir Christopher? We think not, for he could not withhold sundry furtive glances at the windows of a silversmith; and more than once, with a feeling akin to envy, lingered near a gentleman, imprudently handling his gold snuff-box in the fog. Now Mutton had always hated snuff; nay, he still hated it; but he knew not how it was—it almost seemed to him that he had taken a liking to the box. Mutton crept cautiously as a cat down Ludgate-hill, and every moment—perhaps it was the fog—he felt it more difficult to breathe. As he passed the Old Bailey, he thought he should absolutely be choked; he pressed onward into Fleet-street, and, to his astonishment, seemed to inhale new breath at every step, even though the fog became more dense as he proceeded. He had reached Temple Bar; and he had never felt better—never had such a flow of animal spirits, as the reader

may believe from an incident that at that time and place occurred. A sweet little bud of a milliner—one of the thousand untended flowers, flung by fortune on the highway—had just tripped into the city. An hour before, Mutton would have doffed his hat to the unprotected creature; paying deep reverence to her defencelessness—nay, we do believe, would have stripped even to a chairman who should but have looked with license on her. And now—but how shall we reconcile such opposites—how excuse, how account for, such sudden profligacy? The Roman has said that no man becomes a rogue in a minute: we care not to argue—our duty is at present only to chronicle; and sharing in the wonder, the astonishment, the indignation, and the disgust, that, we well know, will convulse the reader, when we narrate the atrocity of Perditus,—it is still our painful duty to state, that he flung his arms about the little milliner, and, taking a dastardly advantage of the fog, vehemently kissed her. The poor little girl screamed, and walked on.

Criminal as he was, Mutton was not wholly lost to a sense of shame. He had no sooner committed the guilt, than he brought himself up at the Bar, struck with a feeling of remorse. "It was very wrong—very wrong," cried Perditus, putting his hand to his blushing cheek—"extremely wrong, but"——and we mourn to say, the new-born libertine again rose within him, for a complacent smile broke upon his face; and hugging his cloak around him, he took a long step, which brought him into the city of Westminster, adding—"but very pleasant."

Mutton strided carelessly down the Strand. It was yet early. Go home? Pshaw! He had, he recollected, promised Mrs. Beard to be home to a dish of chocolate. Chocolate! It was odd; but, for the first time in his life, he thought chocolate a meagre, miserable liquid. What should he do? As Perditus Mutton stood thus undecided, a cry came along the Strand. That cry which, especially in a state of high civilisation, strikes upon the finest chords of men's hearts, awakens their dormant sensibilities, employs their strongest energies; that cry, the apprehensive reader will at once understand to be—"Stop thief!" At any time, Mutton would have paused at the shout—paused, and have felt the buttons of his pockets. On the present occasion, a host of new feelings rose in his bosom, as he heard the bellowing mob, and saw the lanterns of the venerable watchmen; men for whom he had always entertained the highest respect, but whom, such a change had come upon him, he now considered in the unwise and uncharitable light of natural enemies. Mutton was not a man of blood; but he now felt that, under certain circumstances, he could comfortably kill a guardian of the peace.

His less amiable impulses were fast developing themselves as the crowd came towards him. He stood at the mouth of an alley —one of the mysterious veins that wind about the heart of mighty London—and saw the advancing mob. The individual mercilessly branded as a thief, came flying on; with the eyes of a lynx, he spied his vantage, and sprang like a greyhound by our hero up the court. The watchmen were following, when Mutton —a man who had himself served the office of constable—moved by some strange inspiration, flung aside his cloak, and knocked a watchman down: that ancient functionary fell upon his belly, and the second watchman, pressing on his fallen friend, fell over him. This accident was faithfully copied by two or three of the venerable officers, whilst, not altogether heedless of their confusion, the "thief," we must call him so, wound through the alley, closely followed by our hero. The watchmen, knowing the ramifications of the court to be very numerous, philosophically assured the party robbed, that "to go after him was of no use."

Mutton halted, as he thought, in safety; at the same time grasping the collar of the thief, who turned, and seeing who it was that held him, fell upon his knees. "There's a good, kind gentleman, sir!—Oh! your honour, sir!—don't, sir,—I didn't take it, sir."

"What, Pups, my dear!" cried Mutton, in a tone of affection, smiling blandly on the kneeling culprit.

"Don't take me to prison, sir—don't, sir!" cried the link-boy; for it was, indeed, the juvenile torch-bearer of Hog Lane.

"Prison! not for the world, my jewel," exclaimed Mutton, and his heart seemed to open and yearn towards the tatterdemalion, pale and shivering at his feet.

"Upon your soul, you won't, sir?" asked the boy, half-persuaded by the earnest tones and fond looks of Perditus; "you won't hurt me?"

"As soon hurt my own flesh and blood," said Mutton, with affecting emphasis; "but come home—come to my house;" and Perditus, his cloak wrapped about the shoeless Pups, threaded various narrow ways, and at length knocked hastily at the door of his lodgings.

"Dear me—la! What, is it you? such a knock!" cried Mrs. Beard; "is it you, Mr. Mutton!"

"Who should it be?" asked Perditus, and Mrs. Beard opened eyes and mouth at such unusual want of courtesy on the part of her mild lodger.

"Your chocolate and dry toast is ready," said Mrs. Beard.

"Curse chocolate!" exclaimed Perditus, and Mrs. Beard flung up her arms. "Get some brandy," said our hero.

"Rum for me," piped the shrill voice of Pups from under the cloak of his protector; and Mrs. Beard started, as if in Perditus Mutton spoke some demon.

"And, Mrs. Beard, get me a rump-steak," said Mutton.

"And inions," cried the epicurean link-boy, discovering himself.

"O! and I'll have a mug of flip by way of a night-cap, Mrs. Beard," said Mutton.

"And, Mother Beard," screamed Pups from the top of the staircase, "don't forget some 'bacco."

Mutton entered his room, and was nimbly followed by little Pups, Mrs. Beard remaining below, a very statue of astonishment. However, she was at length compelled, by the boisterousness of Mutton—of the lodger she was "blessed in"—to fulfil his orders, and also the supplementary commands of his young friend. Perditus, the meek, sensitive, temperate Perditus, ate his supper—and how such an appetite came upon him, he paused not to inquire—and drank spirits, his former abomination, in the admired society of a baby-vagabond, on whom he continued to lavish the kindest words and tenderest looks, his caresses being received by their object with a sneering incredulity. Mutton was deep in the flip, when, with one hand upon the mug, in the other hand a pipe—until that night untasted luxuries—he sat, with melting eyes gazing on the yellow, dirt-smeared face of Pups, who, lifted on a chair, puffing tobacco-smoke from a long pipe, and swinging his crossed legs, piebald with mud, at least a foot from the ground, replied to the affectionate glances of his sudden friend. Pups spoke and looked the cunning, thievish, ragged Asmodeus of a London alley. He half-closed one of his restless, wandering eyes, and having inhaled a volume of smoke, he puffed it from his hole of a mouth, in a small, continuous stream, looking searchingly at Perditus. The operation done, he thus, in a wheedling, distrustful tone, interrogated Mutton—

"I say, old fellow, what is it makes you so fond of me?" And Pups replaced the pipe between his lips, and awaited an answer.

The question evidently embarrassed Mutton; for he shook his head and replied,—

"My pretty dear, I don't know;" and again he gazed with paternal fondness on the sinister Pups—that devil's errand-boy.

"Well, I was in luck to fall in with you; else, by this time,"

said the little reprobate, "I might have been bound for the stone-jug."

"Take some flip, my love," said Mutton, affected by the thought; and somehow suddenly divining that Pups, in the language of his tribe, discoursed of Newgate. "Take some flip, and—zounds! your 'bacco's out"—saying which, Mutton, affectionately watching his drinking guest, filled for him his empty pipe.

"In the stone-jug," continued the imp; "and only for a bit of shagreen;" saying which Pups, with an upraised lip and a contemptuous motion of the hand, shoved the watch —the worthless shagreen prize—along the table towards his patron.

Mutton looked at the watch with an eye of disgust, that in an instant beamed with sympathy on Pups. That such a cherub should have been sacrificed for a bit of shagreen!

"Shocking to think of," said Mutton, turning over the stolen property. "How lucky that I stood at the court!"

"But when you had your fist at my collar, I thought it was all over with me. I thought you'd give me up. I thought you a gentleman," said Pups.

"You don't know me, my dear," said Mutton, desirous of suppressing any rising fears on the part of his guest, and at the same time putting the stolen goods in his pocket. "You don't know me."

There was a knock at the door, and Pups, laying his pipe down, looked warily about him. Was it an officer? Another knock, and Mrs. Beard entered the room. She had a great respect for her old, her late exemplary lodger; but she looked ireful as a Philippine witch at little Pups, who, seeing it was only "Mother Beard," had resumed his pipe, and, serenely smoking, stared at the landlady.

"It's just eleven, Mr. Mutton," said Mrs. Beard.

"You're as good as a clock," said the complimentary Pups; and he winked at that respectable woman.

"Past eleven, and we want to lock up. When does the—the young gentleman go?" asked Mrs. Beard, trembling with passion, as she glanced at the still winking vagabond.

"Not at all. Go!" cried Mutton. "The unprotected creature stays with me—he sleeps here."

"What! in my bed—and with those legs?" exclaimed Mrs. Beard, casting flaming glances at the feet of Pups, shod with mud, and baked by the hospitable fire of his protector. "A bit of dirt like that!"

"I'm ashamed o' you, Mrs. Beard," said the irritating Pups,

taking the air of a lecturer—"talk o' dirt in that way! remember your beginning."

Mrs. Beard was about to make a most voluble reply, when Mutton swaggered from the table, laid his hands upon the shoulders of his landlady, turned her, as upon a pivot, round, and, pushing her into the passage, shut and then bolted the door. Mrs. Beard was breathless—but it was with astonishment. That Mr. Perditus Mutton—he who would not have brushed the wing of a butterfly—that he, the mild, polite Mutton should have laid ruffian hands upon a woman—and that woman his landlady!

"Depend upon it, he's drunk," said Beard to his wife, when she gaspingly related the atrocity to her charitable husband. "He's drunk!"

"O Nicholas! I wish to my heart he was; then, then indeed, there would be hope! But he's mad, Nick—depend upon it, Mr. Mutton's mad!"

Such was, on due consideration, the belief of Mutton's landlady; and such may possibly be the opinion of the reader, if he have not forgotten the character which we gave our hero—a character in no accordance with his late exploits.

Midnight came; and after a song from Mutton, and a strange ditty—certainly not a Christmas carol—from the musical Pups, both host and visitor retired to bed.

CHAPTER III.

It was twelve o'clock on the following day, and Mutton and his cherished young friend were still at breakfast. Perditus watched the eating and drinking of the yet unclean Pups, with the like care and tenderness that a girl bestows on a pet canary. It seemed to Mutton that the boy would never have sufficient. "Mad, certainly mad!" cried Mrs. Beard, despairingly, as she continued to bring up new supplies of eggs, loaves, and butter. "Do, my dear, eat some more; la! you'll be starved—pray, eat some more:" and Perditus still pressed food upon his delicate companion.

"Couldn't do it, old fellow—tell you, couldn't do it," said the replete Pups, stretching himself luxuriously in the easy chair of Mutton.

"Make quick work here, then!" cried Mutton to his landlady, who cleared the table, feeling more and more afflicted at the

malady of her lodger. She had quitted the apartment but a few minutes, when she returned. "Mr. Tadmor, of 'The Drakes,' was below."

"Hand him up," said Perditus; "Up with old Drybones," said Mutton; thus profanely designating the learned and respected secretary of "The Drakes," of which erudite society it may be necessary to say few words in description.

"The Drakes," then, took their name from the great circumnavigator, Sir Francis Drake; and were composed of adventurous spirits who, condemned, by various cogent reasons, to remain at home, had possibly, on that account, a more intense admiration of travelled enterprise. Much had been expected from the long and frequent sittings of "The Drakes,"—much from their weekly disquisitions, when readings, illustrative of the one object of the society, might be listened to, at least by the sleepless. It was only at the last meeting that Mr. Tadmor himself had begun Raleigh's "History of the World," which he trusted to read to his brethren in little more than a twelvemonth; when, such was the ardour manifested by other members, that it was almost a certainty that a complete reading of not only "Robinson Crusoe," but of "Gulliver," would follow. Dark and curious points had been satisfactorily explained by the intelligence and industry of "The Drakes." They had convinced the hitherto most sceptical that Columbus had touched at Cuba, and that Pizarro did not pass all his life in Spain. Our hero, Perditus Mutton, was not only a member of "The Drakes," but filled the arduous and delicate post of treasurer. In his hands were lodged the funds—funds that had for seven years accumulated, and, at the time we write, amounted to little less than four pounds. His proverbial rectitude—his punctuality—his wise frugality, had recommended him to his brother "Drakes" as the man of men for treasurer. At the last meeting, however, the society had voted the expenditure of fifty shillings from the funds to purchase the tobacco-stopper of Sir Walter Raleigh, that relic having been happily discovered at the shop of a dealer in marine stores, Tower Hill. Cyrus Tadmor now presented himself, prepared to give a receipt for the money; he being authorised to treat with the tradesman for a transfer of the interesting property. Tadmor was a tall, elderly man, of few words, uttered in a dry voice.

"Good-morning, Mutton." Our hero, throwing his right leg over the arm of his chair, and staring at his brother "Drake," nodded and whistled. Tadmor started a little back, but, recovering himself, observed, "Very cold weather."

"D—d cold!" cried Mutton. "Have some brandy?" Had he uttered high-treason, offered deadly poison to Tadmor, that

excellent "Drake" had not been more astonished at the words and actions of his fellow-member.

"You know what I come for, Mr. Mutton?" said Tadmor. Mutton shook his head. "Yes; you must remember: the vote —the tobacco-stopper?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Perditus. "Go on, old Tad."

"Old Tad! But"—— Tadmor faltered, and again stared at Perditus, to be certain that he looked upon a "Drake;"—satisfied of the melancholy fact, he proceeded—"Well, then, Mr. Mutton, I come for the money."

"What money?" cried Mutton.

"What money! Mr. Mutton?—I—this is no time for banter; the subject, at least, I as a 'Drake,' think so, does not admit of a jest. I attend upon you, armed with the authority of the society, for fifty shillings."

"Fifty shillings! Well?" said Mutton.

"Which you, as treasurer, will, of course, hand over to me. Here is the receipt," said Tadmor. "Of course, you have the money?"

"O, yes! To be sure," said Mutton.

"And you will give it me?" said Tadmor, drawing close to the treasurer.

We defy our reader to guess the reply of Perditus Mutton. Can it be believed—can it be accounted for upon any known and natural principle, that when the secretary of the "Drakes" asked for fifty shillings—their money—of their valued treasurer—can it be believed, that that soul of honour, that spirit of meek rectitude, met the demand by placing his forefinger perpendicularly at the right side of his nose, looking with laughing defiance in the face of the officer of the society, and exclaiming with peculiar force, one word,—and that word—"*Gammon!*"

Tadmor jumped to his feet, and, if looks betray anything, evidently expected the floor to open. Mutton sat, with a face of brass, coolly enjoying the astonishment of his visitor. "Can it be possible?" at length exclaimed Tadmor; "can there be such perfidy in the world? Such hypocrisy! Well! after this, who is to be trusted?"

"Nobody," said Mutton, with perfect assurance. "As for the money of the club, I can't give it up; I don't know how it is, Tad, but I can't do it."

"But there is the law, Mr. Mutton,—and the law can punish."

"It's only a simple debt, I think; only a debt:" and Tadmor felt, if possible, a greater shock at the calculating depravity of the culprit. He was about to attempt an expression of his feelings, when Mutton, with much significance, bade him "Good-

day! I wish you a very good-day, Mr. Tadmor: I tell you, I would give you the money if I could, but there's a something here," and Mutton, affectingly, put his hand to his heart, "there's a something here won't let me." Saying which Mutton vigorously bowed his brother "Drake" to the door. Tadmor, almost weeping at the iniquity of man, ran down stairs, determined to call the "Drakes" to council.

"Is he gone?" asked little Pups, looking from behind the large easy chair of Mutton, where, on the entrance of Tadmor, he had hidden himself.

"Why did you creep there, my love?" said Mutton. "Why did you hide?"

"What! didn't you know him? I thought he'd come for me," said Pups, with a grave shake of the head.

"Come for you, my dear! What for?"

"What for?" exclaimed Pups; "bless your innocent eyes, Mr. Mutton! but may there never be another fog, if that warn't the shagreen."

It was too true: Mr. Cyrus Tadmor, secretary to the "Drakes," and hitherto intimate friend of their upright and punctilious treasurer, was the unfortunate gentleman despoiled on the previous evening of his shagreen family watch. "I say, if he has seen it!" remarked Pups, with an ominous look, pointing to the stolen property, hung by Mutton over the mantelpiece. "Mr. Mutton," continued Pups, with the gravity of a cabinet councillor, "you are older than I am, and it isn't for me to advise, but don't you think we'd better leave these lodgings? We *may* find 'em very unhealthy."

A sense of impropriety, a latent emotion of his former nature, made Mutton thoughtful. How extraordinary seemed to him the changes of the past few hours! Was he, could he be, the same Perditus of yesterday? He had a vague recollection of another state of being—of a Mutton very different to that Mutton the protector and the accomplice of a pigmy pickpocket! He who had held the slightest departure from truth and honesty as inevitably fatal to the dignity of human nature, had now the kindliest yearnings towards his fallen species—nay, felt a mysterious respect for courageous roguery. He who would have denounced a highwayman, could now take off his hat to him! That he, Perditus Mutton, should be the unlawful possessor of his friend Tadmor's watch! More, that he should feel resolved, at all hazards, to retain it. And then his affection for little Pups! Mutton had never been a father; but sure he was he could not have felt a more paternal love towards his own flesh than towards the ragged, wary urchin, staring, winking before

him. With such sensations, the appearance of his adopted child smote the sensibilities of his adoptive sire. Sweet innocent! it had neither hose nor shoes, and its jerkin and doublet hung in fringe and lappets. Mutton, almost with tears in his eyes, ordered Mrs. Beard to send for Piece, the tailor. "Yes, my pretty one," said Mutton, smiling down upon the leering Pups, "yes, you *shall* be a gentleman." Piece lived but a few doors away; came instantly on the summons of his customer, and by great luck, having a suit just completed for the son of the churchwarden, a boy of the same inches as Pups, was prevailed upon to devote the clothes to the service of Mr. Mutton's young friend. Hat, shoes, and linen were obtained with all the celerity of which ready money is capable, Perditus assisting at the toilet of the boy, and Mrs. Beard from time to time declaring that her amiable lodger was certainly mad.

"Fit him like his skin, Mr. Mutton: three guineas, if you please," said Piece, Mr. Mutton always paying ready money. Piece received the guineas, and, having given a last attention to the bright green coat of Master Pups, walked gratefully down stairs.

"It's all right," said Pups to his patron, as he heard the street-door close.

"What is right? the clothes, my dear?" asked Mutton.

"No; the guineas—here they are: while he was buttoning me up, I"—— and the adroit operator displayed the three guineas silently extracted from the pocket of the tailor. What could have changed the nature of Mutton—what could possess him to make him smile benevolently on the unhappy child, and, patting his head, to say, "Dear little rogue?"

Perditus and the boy sallied into the street. Who, that saw Pups trip along the Strand, could have believed him to be the self-same urchin that last night flew, winged with terror, from the pursuing crowd? The dirty, ragged, thievish magpie was become a perroquet.

"How d'ye do? I wanted to see you: I shall be alone,—come to-day and dine with me. Mind, at three exactly." Such was the greeting, such the invitation of Mr. Rota, a county magistrate, and an old acquaintance of Mutton's. "Why, what's the matter?" said Rota, pulling up his horse, and holding forth his hand to Perditus.

"Nothing,—nothing;—it's very cold," said Mutton, feeling on the sudden an extraordinary disgust of his friend the magistrate.

"Bless me! whose boy is that?" said Rota, staring hard at little Pups, who seemed to blench somewhat under the inspection.

"He's a—a young friend of mine," replied Mutton; "a—a pretty lad."

"I certainly have seen him before," said the magistrate; "where could it have been?"

"No, no: a young friend of mine, not long from the country," asserted Perditus; and he hurried away, to the astonishment of Rota, the boy showing no inclination to remain behind. "Glad we've got from the *beak*," said Pups, who, we have no doubt, recognised in Rota a former acquaintance.

Mutton and his precious charge walked on; Mutton, as on his return home the previous evening, feeling an unusual interest in the property supposed to be upon the person of every passenger. He could not tell what on the sudden had made him take so lively an interest in the effects of his fellow-citizens. His thoughts were thus busied in the affairs of his neighbours, when he grasped the shoulder of Pups, endeavouring to steady himself; without such feeble support, Mutton had suddenly fallen.

"Hold up, sir!—what's the matter?" cried Pups, in a breath.

Great was the change in the face of Perditus. He staggered to a post, and, leaning thereon, gazed intently at a female. We are aware that in this there is little extraordinary—the like has happened many times to many men and many women;—but surely, surely, Cupid—for it was he at that hour at work—had never, since his wings were fledged, played such a prank. Perditus Mutton had fallen, as into a fit, over head and heels in love; and now he stood, and, panting, gazed on his destroyer. And who was she, and what was the fair creature doing? She was doubtless a Naiad of the stream; but being on earth, sold fish. At the moment Mutton first beheld her she was in the attitude of justice, holding scales; and in those scales were silver eels! Never before had Mutton felt even a tickling of the passion; but now was he a bondman to the archer. "A groat a-pound," said the Naiad, and her voice entered the heart of Mutton: he stood rapt as in a dream; and who shall tell the tumult of his soul when he beheld his sweet destroyer seize each writhing captive, and strip it of its slippery coat? Like a true lover, Mutton wished himself an eel.

The maiden, the bargain being concluded, moved onward; Mutton, like a chained captive, following the steps of the conqueror. What was it that had enslaved him? Could it be beauty? Was he enthralled by lank, unkempt locks, an eye with a furtive expression, the smallest nose, and the largest mouth? Had he fallen a victim to these blandishments, or was there a magic in the tones that pulled him onward, as with a silver cord? We know not; but certain it is, his heart continued

to glow and dilate, and every nerve in his frame responded musically to the music of "live eels!"

Behold Mutton, deaf to the remonstrance of little Pups, now stalking on, now lingering about doors, obedient to the will of his destroyer. The rain came down, but the flame of Mutton burned with undimmed brightness. Still he followed the enslaving vendor of "live eels."

"Well, Betsy, where are you going?" Such was the question put by a sister Naiad to the lady-love of Mutton.

"Going! where should I be going if not to Hog Lane? I suppose, Sarah, you know what's done to-day?" and she lifted her apron to her eye.

"Poor dear fellow!" said Sarah. "Well, Betsy, may you get as good a one! for, bating he was a little wild, he was as kind a fellow as ever broke a tester:" and with this brief eulogy of one, doubtless departed, the speaker passed Mutton, and Mutton followed Betsy.

Perditus Mutton! the correct, refined, gentlemanly Perditus, following a woman who spoke but two words, and those words "live eels!"

It was four o'clock when Mutton arrived in the neighbourhood of Hog Lane. The rain had continued to fall, and our hero, hot with love, was drenched with water. Young Pups, with doubtless a respect for the rich wardrobe he had so miraculously obtained, had long since sought shelter, leaving his patron free to walk alone. Mutton reclined in a sweet and bitter melancholy against the corner of a shed, watching the opposite door of a mansion of an equally unpretending style of architecture. Still the rain came down; but Mutton seemed to heed not the cataract. In a short time a female issued from the opposite house,—a female clothed in rusty black. It was the self-same Betsy who had, a quarter of an hour before, entered there to don the melancholy robe, and to leave therein the unsold portion of her silvery ware. Mutton followed her sorrowful steps. What, then, was his astonishment to behold her enter the very hovel where, on the previous night, he had purchased the inestimable treasure, a treasure he had then about him, a treasure he would never for an instant part with, the CAUL, price five guineas! Mutton paused and watched. In a short time he saw the man, the same man, with the clay-coloured face he had seen the night before, come from the house, and in a garb that left no doubt of his dread business—he was an undertaker. A sad procession, composed of at least a dozen persons, and among whom Perditus instantly recognised the little, pale, old woman, came forth following the dead. Mutton found himself dragged along;

it was in vain to struggle with the power that pulled him. He must follow the corse! He walked at a short distance from the crowd, which continued to increase. "Poor fellow!" exclaimed twenty people; "Such a generous soul!" said another score; and everybody who spoke of the deceased spoke in his praise, and expressed hopes for his happiness. "He must have been a very excellent person," thought Mutton, as he walked on with the throng. "No doubt, a person fulfilling all the difficult duties of his perilous life with exemplary goodness." Such were the thoughts of Perditus, for the moment brought suddenly back to his former principles, which then as suddenly would quit him, and he would again pay homage to the new spirit that had last night fallen upon him.

CHAPTER IV.

The burial over, the mourners returned to the late dwelling of the deceased. The spell-bound Mutton followed the footsteps of the female in black, but was compelled to halt at the door of the hovel, where, for two hours at least, he lingered, listening to detect if possible the notes of her delicious voice from the hubbub within. There was loud laughing, stamping, knocking—sounds of merriment that, at any other time, would have stricken Mutton with horror; but he had lost his better nature—he was a changed man. He stood, his only thought to catch the witching accents of the charmer. As he paused with quickened ears at the door, he heard one of the company call for a song—a call repeated by at least a dozen voices. There was a silence, and then a buzz of remonstrance or dissent; and then Mutton heard one of the party familiarly urge the hesitating vocalist.

"Come, Bunkum, give us that chaunt poor Tom used to like."

"Don't—I can't bear it," exclaimed a feminine voice, sobbingly; and Perditus almost leaped as he heard the tones of his mistress.

"Pour it out, Bunkum," cried the first speaker, unmindful of the sensibilities of Betsy; "go on: why you make as much ceremony as a foreigner. If you'd come from the Opera outright you couldn't be more nice, I *do* think."

"Got a cold at Hounslow last week," said Bunkum; and assuredly he gave evidence of the calamity.

"Go on—we'll take the song in the rough, then," said Bun-

kum's companion; and after due preparation, Tom's favourite song was sung, the whole of the company joining in loudest chorus.

Mutton was wholly absorbed by the pathos of the ditty, which certainly proved Tom to have been of a pensive cast of mind, as the following verse—the only one for which we have space—will testify. Among other complaints the sufferer sang—

> " How hard is the chains of confinement
> That keeps me from my love's delight!
> Cold chains and cold fetters surrounds me,
> And a plank is my pillow at night!"

Mutton, with gushing eyes and melted soul, listened to the ballad—the especial favourite of the deceased Tom. Never before, had music so played upon the strings of his heart, albeit he had heard the warblings of the great Tenducci. Mutton was startled from the delicious reverie into which true harmony will surprise sensitive minds, by a voice abruptly calling upon Betsy.

"Now, Betsy—now, old 'oman"—a spark of indignation fired the heart of Mutton—"now, my lass, give us a song!"

"Me, sing!—me! How could you think it?" said a female voice, tremulous, as Mutton thought, with grief.

"Well, he was a good cretur, Betsy; but it's wicked to grieve—so give us a song," cried a feminine friend.

With a deep sigh and a look of resignation—a look of which Mutton was, unhappily, deprived—the mourner began:—

> " 'Twas down in Cupid's garden,
> For pleasure I did go,
> All for to see the flowers
> Which in that garden grow,
> Which in that garden grow!
>
> " I hadn't been—I hadn't——"

"I can't do it," cried the singer, hysterically; "it seems for all the world as if dear Tom was looking at me." There was a murmur of sympathy, and a third party was called upon to subscribe to the harmony of the evening, when Mutton felt a hand pulling at his cloak.

"Why, if it isn't you!" said Pups. "Poor father! I didn't know it was to be so soon, for I hadn't been home these three days."

"And was it your father, my pretty dear?" asked Mutton.

"Yes; they said he was very fond of me; I dare say he was too, only he never had any time to show it," said the boy, and tears stood in his eyes.

"And your mother—where is she?" inquired Mutton.

"I can't tell—never saw her—only grandmother. Father, they do say, courted Betsy Basket—she that you would follow to-day—poor father!"

"And didn't you love him?" asked Perditus.

"I don't know—dare say I did; only, you see, people as live in the streets, in wet and cold, and sleep on steps, hav'n't time to love one another like folks in warm houses."

"And what did your father die of?" questioned Perditus.

"He warn't drowned; no, he was born safe against that," replied Pups, who hastily continued—"but won't you come in? Stop a little, though—I'll just see grandmother—wait here;" and the boy entered the hovel, and was received with a shout of surprise, justified by his improved appearance. Pups quickly explained that he had met with "such a prime gentleman!"—he was outside—might he come in? The unanimous consent of the company was immediately given, and Perditus Mutton for the second time stood beneath the roof of Miriam Birdseye: the old woman looked at Mutton a significant acknowledgment of their acquaintance, and then turned and whispered to her next neighbour, pointing out our hero as "the gentleman who had last night purchased her dear Tom's caul!—Dear, sweet, unfortunate boy."

Poor old Miriam was the mother of Tom; and, though the world had judged and punished him as an incorrigible scape-grace—a ruthless libertine—a hardened reprobate—he was nevertheless unto her a "dear, sweet, unfortunate boy."

At any other time Perditus would have shuddered at the faces he saw around him; faces marked with the recklessness and the despair of crime—with brutish ignorance, the teeming parent of vice—with the haggardness of want—the cunning of imposture. And there, too, was the child—a poor creature, suffered to grow up like a young wolf, to be afterwards hunted to the death, because it was nothing better! Perditus, however, was proof to these impressions. He looked around him and felt a terrible sympathy with his new companions. He approached the woman—the betrothed of the late Thomas—and, sitting beside her, took her hand with all the reverence of profound love.

"La, sir!" said the girl, simpering.

> "And she look'd with such a look, and she spoke with such a tone,
> That he almost received her heart into his own."

What devilish necromancy had enslaved him? What art, what magic, could have changed Perditus Mutton—the sensitive, reserved, delicate Perditus—into the worshipper of a coarse

wench—a very drab ? The company exchanged looks that plainly enough declared their astonishment.

"It's all right," said Bunkum; "the gentleman is very drunk!"

A jest was let fall by one of the wags, and a loud shout followed. In the midst of the clamour, Perditus, who had been protesting eternal affection to Betsy, suddenly leapt from his seat. He stared about him as if awakened from a hideous dream.

"What's the matter, sir ?" asked Betsy, approaching him.

Perditus receded from her with an expression of intolerable disgust; rushed to the door, and made his way up the lane.

"It's all right!" said Bunkum; "I've picked his pocket;" and the robber triumphantly exhibited a packet. It was opened; but, to the disappointment of the party, it proved to be nothing but—"Dear Tom's caul!"

Since the birth of Mercury there had never been so benevolent a theft. Perditus had been relieved of an imp that threatened to destroy him; of a fiend that had subtly endowed him with the ungracious dispositions of the first owner of the caul; a type of superstition, of which when the best and wisest of us are enamoured, though before the meekest and most innocent of lambs, we are prone to become little better than "lost muttons!"

Need we add that the "Drakes" were presented with the tobacco-stopper of Sir Walter, at the cost of their awakened treasurer—that Mr. Tadmor again possessed his shagreen watch ?

CHAPTER V.

Perditus lived until sixty. He was attended to the grave by his few surviving brother "Drakes," all of whom mourned the loss of a kind, gentle, genial man. A woman and three little girls—god-daughters of the deceased—stood at the grave: their father, the parish clerk—a man honoured for the virtuous fulfilment of the social duties—sobbed bitterly as the earth rose above Perditus. That clerk was the poor, outcast, vagabond link-boy—the cunning, thievish, little Pups. He had been snatched from ignorance and guilt by the compassion of our hero; and the happy, honest man wept tears of gratitude in the grave of his preserver.

THE

MAYOR OF HOLE-CUM-CORNER.

"AND pray, sir, in what reign did this happen?" asked a modern master of the dramatic robes, when required to furnish dresses for the valorous Saint George and his companions.

"Reign!" echoed the master of the revels, with a laughing, wondering look—"Reign!"

"Yes, sir: as it has ever been with me a point of reputation to attend to the minutest details of historical costume, I am desirous of learning the reign in which Saint George fought the dragon, in order that—you perceive, sir—fidelity in these matters"——

"Let's look at the rags," interrupted the master of the forthcoming pageant; "and, ha! ha! never mind the reign!"

We narrate this little anecdote, in the hope that it may serve at once as preface and apology to the legend we are about to recount—a legend to which we are totally unable to ascribe a date, and for which questionable advantage we earnestly trust the reader cares no more than the master of the revels above cited, in the more important case of our national saint. The trials of Tobias, albeit unsung, unsaid, may be no less true than the victories of Saint George, who still slays his dragon on sovereigns and crown-pieces, and thereby affords to the least imaginative of her Majesty's subjects a consolatory assurance, that he who possesses many records of his glory is, in proportion to the number possessed, charmed from the assaults of many ills; whilst the trials of Tobias, though probably of high moral value, may not so unequivocally manifest their sterling worth. Notwithstanding this conviction, we are induced to bring our hero on the page, confessing that the time of his life and acts is equally uncertain as the date of the knight of fairyland, and hoping to meet with readers to whom it is equally indifferent.

Since Babylon is but a name, it will hardly amaze the philosophic reader, when he shall learn that Hole-cum-Corner was

once a flourishing township, though there is not to be found any map of England, where even its site is indicated; nor will the mind, disciplined by the contemplation of worldly mutability and its consequent injustice, refuse belief to the historical fact—too long unknown—that Banbury, at present, and for many years celebrated for its toothsome cakes, usurps the glory due to Hole-cum-Corner—the invention of those savoury delicacies making the rightful renown of the mayor of that most ancient human dwelling-place; of the very mayor, succeeded by our hero, Tobias Aconite, maltster and ale-brewer. We have gleaned this golden news from original records, quite at the service of the reader; from documents that prove how time, in its revolutions, confounds the little with the great—robbing one to heap upon another—with cakes no less capricious than with mayors.

When Hole-cum-Corner flourished, it was the glorious ambition of those enviable men elected to the chief place of the magistracy, to mark their mayoralty, either by some inestimable invention, or by the correction of a crying abuse. Thus, every mayor put the impress of his genius on his twelvemonth's rule; mayoralties being computed by the townsfolk of Hole-cum-Corner, not by dates, but by things. As thus:

The Mayoralty of the Nutmeg-grater!
The Mayoralty of the Whipping-post!
The Mayoralty of the Pottle-pots!
The Mayoralty of the Ass's-Side-saddle!
The Mayoralty of the Sucking-pigs!
The Mayoralty of the Cakes!

AND

(which brings us to the Mayoralty of Tobias Aconite)

The Mayoralty of the Stolen Gander!

We will not even insinuate such an injustice upon the reader, as to suppose him incapable of rightly applying the abovenamed commodities or things. No; he at once perceives that the inhabitants of Hole-cum-Corner owed the origin of that most domestic and most genial instrument, the nutmeg-grater, to the intelligence of a posset-loving mayor—that the whipping-post was erected by a sterner, but no less public-spirited functionary—that the execrable crime of lessening the pottle-pot, was terribly avenged under another magistrate—and that the asses of Hole-cum-Corner, until the mayoralty of Roger Littlebean, in a lamentable state of darkness on the matter, were apprised of the sex of their load by the difference of the saddle, and thereby

taught to gently amble, when otherwise they might have kicked. Sucking-pigs had been long on the advance, the price sent up by the unprincipled machinations of certain boar-monopolists; but in the mayoralty of Savourpork, they were, by the unassisted energy of his character, reduced to the good old standard, it being thenceforth made an affair of the gallows to demand for a month-pig one farthing more than a groat. Of the mayoralty of the cakes, we have already spoken; and with a brief expression of admiration of these men, we shall proceed with our immediate history.

We cannot, however, refrain from holding up as an example to all mayors, present and to come, the worthy deeds of the Mayors of Hole-cum-Corner. They knew the true substance of glory, nor lost it for a shadow—a sound. Alack! what are the passing triumphs of the mayoralty revel?—of what avail the blasting clarions—the caracoling steeds—the collar of SS—the sheriff's chain—the gown of violet and minever? What is all this but stuff for an apprentice's holiday—an empty pageant, passing away like the triumphs of the Cæsars? A magnificence beginning at Westminster and ending at Guildhall? The memory of such things goes out and dies, even with the torches, leaving no fragrance behind. But the mayor who writes his history in the enlarged pottle-pot—who indissolubly links his name with a sucking-pig for fourpence—the yearly magistrate who associates himself with cupboard-comforts,—his renown shall be heard at ten thousand hearths, when the fame of other mayors shall be voiceless—dumb as a dead trumpeter! And now to the history of Tobias.

Gaffer Nimmington, of Alderclump, stood charged before the Mayor, with having basely, maliciously, and inhumanly carried off the gander of Farmer Dock, the said gander being of venerable age and surpassing merits. There was no evidence against the prisoner: but the accused having once stood in the pillory, and on two occasions having suffered the pain and ignominy of public whipping, there was, in the breast of Farmer Dock, not the shadow of a doubt of the guilt of the said Gaffer.

Gaffer Nimmington raised his eyes, lifted his hands, and protested his innocence. He was not ashamed to confess the whippings, such discipline having done him a world of good—he was a reformed man, and would scorn to lay his finger on the ganders of his neighbours.

Tobias, the mayor, looking sternly at the prisoner, said, he feared that appearances were much against him. A whipped man must, to the end of the chapter, be a man suspected.

Farmer Dock humbly yet earnestly prayed for a third scourging of the accused.

The Mayor, passing the tips of his four fingers along each eyebrow, remarked, that public morals cried loudly for an example.

Hereupon, Gaffer Nimmington, falling on his knees, roared like any bull.

The heart of Tobias was softened; and, with a humanity that ennobled his office, he resolved, ere he passed sentence of the stocks and the beadle's whip, to rigidly question the accused. Heaven forbid that he, the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner, should hastily inflict wrong upon the innocent! With these exalted thoughts, Tobias cleared his throat, and proceeded to examine the prisoner. He had been twice whipped?—Twice; but hoped he might claim the benefit conferred by such punishment. What was the use of whipping, if no good was to come of it? What were Gaffer's means of livelihood?—Very poor; for he was lame of one hand, and was not quite recovered from the jaundice. Where had Gaffer passed the three last nights?—One in a dry ditch, and two under a haystack!

"I never saw a clearer case," crowed forth the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner. "If, my man, appearances are worth anything, it is plain that you have stolen Dock's gander."

"Your worship wouldn't whip a man upon appearance?" humbly questioned Gaffer.

The impertinence of the query was too much for Tobias; and the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner, slapping his hand upon a volume of the Statutes, cried with an oath, that "with the greatest pleasure in life, he would!"

Whereupon, Gaffer Nimmington was handed over to the beadle, who straightway locked him in the stocks, and then proceeded to make every necessary arrangement for the supplementary punishment of whipping. The ceremony was appointed to take place at noon next day; and loud and many were the praises of the townsfolk, touching the wisdom and the stern sense of justice displayed by the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner. He was, to them, the paragon of magistrates—a very Solomon in the chair. With such a functionary, honest folks might go safely to sleep with the door on the latch: under his protecting wing, even geese were sacred!

The day of Gaffer's whipping was a holiday throughout Hole-cum-Corner. The shops were closed, and men and women pranked themselves in their best;

The babe leaped up in its mother's arms;

and it was said, the church bells, of their own accord, rang out a merry peal. All prepared themselves for a holiday, save and except Gaffer Nimmington.

We have too much respect for the natural tenderness of our readers, to inflict upon them a description of the execution. We will not dilate upon the sinewy arm of the beadle—the shameless fortitude of the culprit—the elevated serenity of the Mayor himself, and the general good-humour, enhanced by very many quips and jokes, of the attending mob. Let it suffice the reader to know that everything passed off with the greatest satisfaction to all parties concerned, taking no account of Gaffer.

Justice had asserted her injured dignity—the proper sacrifice had been offered up to the popular idol—Appearance ; when, to the annoyance of the Mayor, the astonishment of the multitude, and the honour of the scourged Nimmington, Farmer Dock's gander suddenly appeared, as it was supposed, on its way home to its ancient dwelling-place. Whether love or business had caused its long absence from the farm-yard, was never rightly understood. It was, however, plain that Gaffer Nimmington had been precipitately whipped, and great was the common indignation against Mr. Mayor !

Gaffer was immediately liberated, when, falling upon his knees, with a scowling look at Tobias, he muttered to the fiends, devoting the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner, the victim to that arch-demon, Appearance ! From that moment, as our future history will show, Tobias Aconite was a doomed man and a lost mayor.

Soft and balmy was the evening, when the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner, feeling the meditative fit come on, walked forth into the fields. The air was fragrant with new-mown hay —the lark carolled in the sky—the west glowed with ten thousand glories—the hour, the scene was favourable to the sweetest emotions ; and Tobias, seating himself in the midst of a haycock, looked about him with that deep tranquillity of heart, so rarely the fate of mayors to know. Now, his fingers played among the hay—now, they gently tapped his dexter leg—now, he whistled softly—and now there rose within him a thought or pastoral song. His heart was steeped—melted in the balm or evening : not, at a most prosperous brewing, had he felt serener bliss. Forgetting he was a mayor, he felt a love for all the world. In this delicious mood, he turned his head, and beheld within—say a span—of his left arm, a rustic maiden seated in the hay. She blushed, but stirred not. Here was a situation for the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner ! At any other time, Tobias

would have called to his immediate aid all the terrors of his official nature; but there was enchantment in the place and hour, and when Tobias should have stormed, he gently coughed. The maiden, with eyes downcast upon earth, sighed. "It is plain," thought Tobias, "that the damsel is a stranger, and knows me not;" and as this conviction of her ignorance came upon our hero, his face glowed, and his looks brightened. She knew him not! To her he was not the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner; nor, such was his benign determination, would he suddenly confound her simplicity with the dread intelligence. For a time he would be merely a mortal—simply a man, and nought beyond. In that moment, Hole-cum-Corner was to all intents and purposes, without a mayor. Tobias looked around, above—listened; and then he cast his eyes upon the maid, and coughed a little louder than before. As he gazed, the maiden, never venturing to raise her looks, suddenly began to weep; then to wring her hands; and then, ere Tobias could draw his breath, with a shrill hysterical laugh, she fell into his open arms! This circumstance, for a man of Aconite's dignity, was sufficiently distressing; but it was rendered less tolerable by another unfortunate occurrence,—it happened to be seen! Yes, crossing the distant stile, were two of the most sober denizens of Hole-cum-Corner—two discreet, two pattern men,—astounded at the appalling evidence of their own eyes. It *was* Tobias Aconite—it could be no other than the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner! Tobias attempted to rise, but suddenly felt as if all his limbs were lead; he was about to chide the girl for the boldness of her bearing, but his tongue was palsied. What spirit of mischief could have made him sit among the hay? His friends, with indignant strides, crossed the field, and in a twinkling, turned a hedge. Here was a dilemma! They would immediately trumpet the news through the streets of Hole-cum-Corner—the Mayor was a lost dignitary. The vehemence of this feeling gave him speech and motion: with a loud oath, he jumped to his feet, and with more than official wrath, began to inquire, "why such a baggage had had the face to faint in the arms of a mayor?" This said, Tobias paused for a satisfactory reply; resolving, however, to oppose a breast of steel to the feminine weapons of the penitent. The damsel rose, and turning her face upon Tobias, in the exuberance of her animal spirits, skipped half-a-dozen times from the ground—snapped her fingers—whistled—and then, calling to her face a look that paralysed poor Aconite, immediately slapped him on the shoulder, and without a word, took to her legs. Legs!—wings! She was gone—flown—vanished,—how and whither Tobias knew not. He stood bewildered—

looked aghast—for, either he was in a day-dream, or the wench laughed and leered at him with the mouth and eyes of Gaffer Nimmington.

After much pondering, Tobias felt there was more in this than could be readily divined, even by a Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner. Thrusting his hands in his breeches-pockets, his hat pulled over his brow, his head somewhat inclined to his left shoulder, Tobias in a deep study wended his way homeward. Possibly, he had arrived at his threshold without further perturbation, had not his road lain by the barn of Farmer Dock: of this, however, he was at the time unconscious, but was speedily roused to the fact by a most vehement hissing. Looking about him, he saw the old gander, its neck crooked like a serpent, its wings extended, and its eyes, to the startled conscience of Tobias, like sparks of flame, making at his legs. "Possibly I was wrong, to whip upon appearance." Such was the thought that flashed through the brain of the Mayor, as, betaking himself to flight, he, with great difficulty, distanced the angry bird. Then did the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner pause, and then, considering the meanness of his assailant, did blushes stain the face of Tobias Aconite. Wherefore blush, O silly Tobias! Greater men than the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner, even before the hatching of the geese in the Capitol, have been put to their legs by insolent ganders, though time, plucking the assailants bare, hath in after-season used their spoils to the glorification of the mighty hissed. Nathless, Tobias ran.

The Mayor had determined to seek his own fireside; but the gander having disturbed the current of his thoughts, sent him—and here a metaphysician might tell us the why and the wherefore—to the public-house. The "Red Mug," be it known, was the principal hostelry of Hole-cum-Corner. There was the arm-chair that—we know not for how many centuries—had received the demi-sacred person of the mayor for the year being. Tobias Aconite crossed the threshold of the "Red Mug," and—

Certain we are, if slander be a snake, it is a winged one; it flies as well as creeps, or it had never preceded the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner to the alehouse. That it had outstripped him was made sufficiently plain by the looks of the hostess: she was wont to begin to simper and courtesy very low at the sound of the Mayor's foot; and now, when Tobias stood revealed before her, she could hardly pull her lips into a smile; with difficulty kept her virtuous nose from that instinctive curl to which exceedingly good folks treat very naughty ones, and for curtesying, as she afterwards declared to her husband, "she could no more

do it than an elephant" (for at the time whereof we write, be it understood, elephants had not come to their joints). Tobias wisely suffered his sense of dignity to blind him to the frozen civility of the hostess, and passed on. Happy was it for Tobias that he did so; for thus, he saw not the two maids, the man and the boy, all peeping from several corners at the libertine Mayor. Strange! but Tobias might have entered the "Red Mug" twenty times a-day, and neither Prudence, nor Maude, nor Sampson, nor Bob, would have moved one of their most insignificant muscles to look at him; and yet within an hour had the Mayor become a curiosity, a marvel to stare and shudder at.

"I always thought so well of him," cried Maude. "I'd have been sworn for him," exclaimed Prudence. "Such a downright steady one, I thought," said Sampson; whilst Bob, with a grin, gave it as his opinion, "that nobody was to be trusted after he."

How often does it happen that a man learns that he had a good name, only when he ceases to possess it! If a man would know what his friends thought of him, let it be given out that he is dead, or has unfortunately picked a pocket. Then mute opinion finds a tongue: he was the best of fellows, or, in the words of Bob, "nobody is to be trusted after he."

Tobias took his appointed seat; many denizens of Hole-cum-Corner were at their jugs; some tittered, some laughed outright, and one of the boldest begged to know of his worship what he thought of the crops?

"Crops!" cried Tobias, with feverish lips.

"Yes, your worship, the hay they say is getting mighty for'ard."

Tobias called upon his dignity, but it came not to his aid. For half an hour he sat on thistles, and then, amidst a very shower of laughter, quitted the "Red Mug."

The next morning, and for days afterwards, wherever Tobias Aconite moved in the town of Hole-cum-Corner, he met no urchin that, grinning, carried not in his belt or cap a whisp of hay.

The mayor was a libertine—a doomed man.

Face it as he might, Tobias could not but feel that his reputation was lost in Hole-cum-Corner. In vain did he call to his aid the consciousness of his innocence—in vain, with new philosophy, did he strive to put aside appearance with a "pish!"—appearance was against him, and he, the most virtuous of men, was held the most profligate of mayors. Rated at home—preached at when he went to church—even taken to task

when on the bench, life was become to Tobias a misery and a load.

"Woe is me!" cried the desolate Mayor, seated solitary in his chimney-corner; for his dame, in a whirlwind of wrath had quitted him—the wretch!—to solace herself over her husband's infirmities at the house of a gossip. "Woe is me!" exclaimed Tobias, crossing his legs, and peering with deeper sadness among the burning coals. "Woe is me!" cried Tobias for the third time, and as he spoke, a sharp peremptory knock was heard at the outer door. "Somebody for a warrant," thought Tobias; "or, perhaps"——

Ere Tobias could shape to himself another guess, a stranger stood before him, shown to the presence of the Mayor by his handmaid, Constance.

"You have business with me?" asked the Mayor.

"Right! I have, old cock," answered the stranger, at the same time relieving himself of an ample cloak, which, with a broad hat, he familiarly flung upon the table, and then seating himself opposite to Tobias, stroked his chin, and with his eyes fixed upon the Mayor, treated himself with a scarcely audible whistle.

"He can't be in the ale trade," thought Tobias, uneasy at the odd, composed demeanour of his visitor, and no less wondering at his mode of address; for the stranger uttered "old cock," with as much solemnity as if he had said, "your holiness."

The stranger remaining silent, Tobias again essayed an invitation to discourse. "Will you draw nearer the fire?" asked the Mayor, with increasing trepidation.

The visitor cast a contemptuous look at Tobias, and exclaimed in hollow, satirical tones, "And do you call *that* a fire?"

As he spoke, to mark his opinion of the embers, the stranger thrust his right leg into the midst of the blazing fagots, and again softly whistled, the flames creeping up his knee.

Tobias screamed, "Good Sir! your leg!"

To this benevolent warning, the stranger calmly observed, "How smacks the ale?"

Tobias, with all his faults, was hospitable as Palemon; hardly would he have closed his door against a mad dog. Hence, with a loud knock, he summoned Constance, who, instructed in the slightest household nods of her master, betook herself to the cellar.

"A late time for fires," remarked the visitor.

"It is rather late," replied the confounded Tobias, his eye upon his visitor's leg—the said leg becoming hot, red hot, as

glowing iron,—"it is late, but the night was so extremely wet, that"——

"Shocking weather for the hay," said the stranger, again whistling, and throwing a look at Tobias, that, Mayor as he was, made him gasp again. At this moment, however, Constance entered with a large stone jug, crowned with the best ale, which she had happily placed upon the table, ere her eye fell upon the red-hot right leg of the visitor; for no sooner did she behold the horrid wonder, than she screamed, flung her apron over her eyes, and rushed from the spot, crying with a loud voice upon all the saints.

The visitor, filling a horn, tost it off, and gently smacking his lips, observed, "Small—small—but pretty."

"Pure as the light!" asseverated Tobias. "Are you in"—Tobias could not keep his eyes from the glowing leg of the stranger—"are you in the ale way?"

"I often do a little in that trade; but, I may say," added the stranger with much gravity, "I may say, I am a general dealer."

"Dabble somewhat, perhaps, in the corn line?" ventured Tobias.

"A.d—d deal—hem! I beg your pardon," cried the visitor, a little confused at his breach of good manners. "I do, decidedly;" and here the stranger blandly smiled; "but I'll give ye a toast."

Again Tobias glanced at his guest's red-hot leg, and then taking courage from the sociality of his character, rose, and placing his open palms together, in the mildest voice, begged of his visitor to be permitted to ask of him a very little favour.

"Certainly—with the greatest pleasure in the world," was the consent of the stranger. "What is it?"

"Your leg—your right leg," replied Tobias diffidently; "if you would only withdraw"——

"To be sure—it is but just—will you oblige me by changing places?" Tobias immediately moved to the other side of the hearth, the stranger also crossing. "And now, old fellow," said the guest, affectionately addressing his left leg, "and now, it is your turn;" saying this, he plunged that sinister limb into the fire, at the same time rubbing with his hand the right one, that sparkled as he rubbed it. Tobias looked aghast. "A little nasty rheumatism," said the stranger, observing the wonderment of his host; "an excellent remedy. And now if you please," and he filled, "a toast—Here's the health of Gaffer Nimmington!"

"Poor fellow!" said the Mayor, reflecting on his hasty

judgment; "still, matters were black against him. I did as any other mayor would do; and now, Sir," said Tobias, getting courage from his ale, "now, what may be your business with me?"

"I want to sell you something," said the stranger.

"What is it? I don't know that I want anything, except—except"——

"Ha! that's it," said the guest; "that's the very thing I come to sell."

"You're not a pedler?" asked Tobias. "No—you can't be a pedler?"

"I can let you have a small commodity dog-cheap," cried the stranger, winking significantly.

"Where's your pack?" cried the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner.

"I have it with me, though you do not see it. Let me see, it is now how many thousand years since I first began to tramp about the world?"

"Years! Mercy upon me!" exclaimed Tobias; "surely, Sir, you mean days?"

"Ay, very true! be it so—days. And take my word for't, some pretty nick-nacks have I bartered — things that have made the owners glorious folks: and now, I come—come here, through wet and wind and cold—to offer you a thumping pennyworth."

"And what is the article?" asked Tobias, his curiosity excited by the earnestness of his visitor; "tell me, what is it you would sell me?"

"A bit of good, stout, serviceable *seeming*," said the stranger.

"*Seeming!*" cried the Mayor.

"Seeming," echoed his guest. "A superfine cloak, trimmed with ermine that shall never speck; guarded with gold that shall not tarnish—a thing of such fine, yet tough web, that you shall go in it through all the thorny places of the world, yet shall it not tear—shall it not fray—a beautiful, yea a magnificent cloak! Will ye barter?"

"I am but a simple mayor," said Tobias; his fancy roused by the glowing words of the stranger, "and fear I may not purchase such bravery. Alack! what should I do with it?"

"What will ye do without it?" cried the stranger. "Tush! you must have it."

"Have you sold many such?" asked Tobias, feeling a yearning for the cloak. "What's the price?"

"A trifle—and for that I'll give ye a good long credit," answered the visitor.

"Take another horn," exclaimed Tobias, and he poured the

ale.—"By the rood thou hast a heart of gold! And is there, in good faith, such virtue in the cloak, as thou dost speak of?"

"The cloak hath served tyrants, traitors, muckworms, courtesans, drunkards, intriguers, bigots"——

"Hallo! hallo! Stop," cried Tobias, astonished at the catalogue.

"And they have walked in it," continued the visitor, heedless of the Mayor, "outside benefactors, patriots, philanthropists, prudes, hermits, sanctified good people, saints on earth."

"And all by the cloak?" asked the rapt Tobias.

"All by the cloak," answered the stranger, who, taking from his pocket a little book, looked blithely in the face of the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner, and said—"Come, write me down an order."

"There's hardly room," observed Tobias, turning over the leaves which, in truth, were filled to the edges with no mean names.

"There," cried the stranger, laying the end of his finger on a blank place; "write it there."

"My wife won't know me in it!" exclaimed Tobias, already enjoying the triumph of the cloak.

"Had you but worn it in the hay-field," observed the visitor, "you still had been the prudent, moral Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner."

Tobias held the pen between his thumb and finger; in another instant his name had been in the book, when his good genius, the spirit of thrift, twitched him by the elbow, and he laid down the pen, and uttering an old saw touching the usefulness of short reckonings, said, "So far, so well; 'tis a pretty cloak thou dost talk of—but one word yet; what am I to pay thee for it?"

"The cloak shall last thee as long as thou dost live; ay, till thou dost don thy shroud," said the stranger, evading a direct answer to the prudent query of Tobias.

"An excellent cloak," assented the Mayor, "but how much? Nay, man, how much?"

"Let the bargain stand thus," said the trader. "I'll find thee in a cloak, under which thou shalt walk the earth; yea, as the very pink of men—a sober, honest, virtuous, noble-hearted mayor and ale-brewer; I'll find thee in this garment, until thy carcass be coffined, and thy grave be dug, and then"——

"What then?" asked Tobias, turning pale, and trembling.

"Why then, in payment of my cloak, I'll take thyself."

"I'll be d—d if I have the cloak," roared Tobias.

"Exactly so," remarked the stranger.

"That is paying a pretty penny for appearance," said the Mayor. "Get out of my house!" and the indignant Tobias rose, and seizing a stool, flourished it before the unmoved face of the cloak-merchant. "Get out of my house!"

"Thou wilt buy the cloak," said the stranger, coolly, and he rose to depart—"for appearance?"

"Curse appearance!" cried Tobias, in the new strength of his virtue; "an honest man defies it."

"Trust me, friend," replied the trader, wrapping himself in his garment, and putting on his hat—"trust me, thou wilt have a valorous heart to live against appearance—nay, I know thou wilt have the cloak." So saying, the stranger departed; and Tobias, perplexed and over-wrought by the condition of his visitor, for his red-hot legs, his peculiar style of barter, unerringly revealed the devil, sank upon his joint-stool speechless and despairing. Was he then to be the victim of appearances? Was he, an honest, well-meaning mayor, to stand in the chronicles of Hole-cum-Corner, a profligate and wretch? It was a hard fate for a worthy man; and yet, thought Tobias, it is better to suffer innocently, keeping a good conscience, than to win a false reputation by outside virtues, when all is rascal within. Such was the noble resolution of Tobias; and so strengthened, he gulped another draught of ale, and vehemently slapping his knee, cried, "I will *not* have the cloak."

Excellent, high-minded Tobias! Champion of truth, against appearance, worthy Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner!

Gentle reader, never parley with the devil. Though you treat him with the coldest politeness—though entering your homestead (and where will he not sometimes look in?) you suffer him, only for a few moments, to take a seat and "rest his weary shanks"—depend upon it he will leave traces of his visit. On the day following the appearance of the cloak-merchant, the house of Tobias was thronged with the gossips of the town, brought thither by the odd reports of Constance, the maid, who had sworn to the red-hot legs of the stranger, as further corroborated by the burnt prints of his feet in the oak flooring. There they were, sure enough! And for many scores of years, there was a proverb in Hole-cum-Corner, that he who drank with the devil, would have the footsteps of the fiend at his fireside. It was sufficiently plain from these supernatural foot-prints, that Tobias had sold himself. He who had resolutely held a joint-stool at the fiend's head, was, by one award, acknowledged the bondman of Satan! Could it be otherwise—were not appearances against him?

Days elapsed, and Tobias saw himself shunned by all men; he was still a mayor, it is true; but he was no longer considered a Christian. All the townsfolk passed him, and no man bowed—no maiden dropped the customary salute. "Better be in my grave," thought Tobias Aconite.

The church clock struck ten, as one morning Tobias turned a corner into the principal street of his "own romantic town." It was strange, people no longer stared at him, as, since the adventure in the hay-field, they had constantly done; there was no winking one to the other—no pointing—no suppressed laughter; he walked, it is true, ungreeted by any tokens of respect, yet exempt from the scornful salutations, the sneers, that had too long vexed him. "My good name begins to triumph;" thought Tobias. "Yes, he is a poor man, and a poor mayor who cannot live down appearance; I knew my victory would come—and now, even now, it is upon me."

Such were the flattering thoughts of Tobias as he proceeded up the street, when about mid-way he saw a crowd collected—an enormous crowd, for the population of Hole-cum-Corner; and saw people hurrying to and fro, taking no note whatever of him, whose function, as he considered it, was to be present at every trial. "What can be the matter?" thought Tobias, quickening his pace towards the mob.

"A swine!" exclaimed a woman coming from the crowd; "a hog's a lord to he!"

"Poor cretur!" sighed a second, "she must have a nice time of it with such a bargain."

"If he was mine," cried a third, "I'd sweeten his toast and ale for him, I warrant."

"Well, it is too early in the morning," remarked a chubby-faced shopkeeper, standing at his door; "besides, any respectable man would, in such a state, have stayed at home."

"He'll be the eternal shame and ruin of Hole-cum-Corner," cried a neighbour tradesman; who was proceeding in his prophecy, when he was interrupted by a couple of stout fellows, come from the mob, to beg the loan of a shutter, resolutely refused by the owner, on the ground that an honest man's shutter was too good to carry such a vagabond.

All this Tobias heard and noted as he strode towards the crowd. At length he pushes in the very thick of the mob, and beholds—oh! wicked enchantment!—malignant conjuration!—Satanic spell, to rob a man and mayor of dearest fame!—

Tobias Aconite beholds—himself! His true similitude—his very image—his perfect identity! And how? in what condition is this fantastic image—his other self, begotten by Beelzebub?

Alas! filthily drunk—lying in the highway, now raving, shouting, cursing—and now in maudlin tears and laughter, calling himself the prettiest of mayors, and begging any one of the company to favour him with a song.

"If he is Tobias," thought Aconite, "then who am I?" And then it flashed upon him, that no soul had noticed him—that he had passed like a shadow through the streets—a thing unseen, unthought of! He, his proper self, was then invisible; and oh! misery—he and his deeds were represented to the honest folks of Hole-cum-Corner, by the mass of drunkenness shouting and wallowing before him. The heart of Tobias sank like a stone.

"Will you buy the cloak, now?" cried a voice at the ear of Tobias, who, turning round, beheld the stranger with the red-hot legs. "Will you buy now?" he repeated, pointing triumphantly to the false Tobias.

Tobias stretched out his arm, and raised his voice to seize and publish the tempter, but his hand grasped the air, his voice died in his throat; and the demon slowly moving from the crowd, winked at the wretched Mayor, and, as Tobias thought, irreverently thrust his tongue in his cheek. "The Lord help me!" replied Tobias.

"Drink! drink! ha! ha! drink! Hurrah! ye ragamuffins!" shouted the impostor Tobias in the road.

"What a beast!" thought the true Mayor.

"Ha! ha! and am I not a pretty boy?" roared the counterfeit, as he suffered himself to be placed upon an ass borrowed from Nick the sandman, to bear him home. He was no sooner secured upon the beast, and supported on each side, than the false Tobias burst into a song, all the rabble, the boys and girls, shouting and hallooing chorus.

And thus singing—thus shouting, did the procession move towards the mansion of the Mayor.

"What will my wife say?" mused the real Tobias; and a pleasant feeling of curiosity to mark the meeting of his helpmate and his representative, lightened the sad spirit of Aconite, who followed the mob, an outcast, to his own dwelling.

And at length the crowd paused before the Mayor's door: in a trice the counterfeit Tobias was lifted from the back of the ass, and roaring and bellowing, was borne into the house, and placed in the arm-chair—Dame Aconite and Constance, her maid, speechless with rage and wonder at the infamy of their lord and master. The real Tobias, all invisible, took his place in a corner of the room, and as patiently as possible awaited the tempest. Dame Bridget seated herself a very few paces from him she

conceived to be her drunken spouse. She spoke not; but her eyebrows were knit together—her teeth gnawed her under lip, and she rocked herself to and fro, at times smiling terribly.

"It's coming," said the real Tobias.

"My love," cried the forgery,—"Bridget, isn't she my own love?" hiccupped the false mayor.

"Aren't you a beast?" asked Dame Tobias; "a pretty beast?"

"He! he!" answered the counterfeit; and then, bending his eyes upon the dame, in a deep authoritative voice, he called—"Bridget, a jug of ale."

"If it would poison ye, yes," answered Dame Tobias, and still she frowned, still rocked.

"She'll have it in a minute," was the conviction of the true Tobias.

"Ale!" roared the false husband.

"Beast!" screamed Dame Aconite; "not if a drop would save ye from the fiend."

"Isn't this dreadful—isn't this shocking?" muttered the unreal Tobias, and then he burst into tears.

"Yes—cry—cry your eyes out, ye vile man, that ye mayn't see what a brute ye are. Cry away!" exclaimed Dame Bridget.

"'Twould melt a stone to do it," said the visionary mayor; "but it must be done." And he rose to his feet, and staggering to a corner, took therefrom an ash-stick, about the thickness of a labourer's thumb. "It's enough to break my heart," he said, approaching the dame, and significantly cutting the air with the switch, "but it must be done."

"What must be done?" cried Dame Aconite, somewhat alarmed at the decision of her husband.

"Wives that won't fetch ale," answered the impostor Tobias, "must be taught the way to the cellar." Saying this the ruffian counterfeit seized the dame.

"Why, you wouldn't?" exclaimed the wife in astonishment, for she could not say another word in remonstrance: the false mayor—shame to manhood—laid the stick about the shoulders of a weak and lovely woman, the said woman screaming more murders than, in this world of sin, had ever been committed; her cries taken up and assisted by the lungs of Constance, who, rushing to the door, called upon the townspeople of Hole-cum-Corner to save the existence of the best of wives, and the tenderest of women! Whilst they both screamed, the false Tobias beat, and the true Mayor, with a complacency that even astonished himself, sat in the corner.

A few minutes, and the house was filled with indignant neighbours. Some ran to assist Dame Aconite, who fainted the very moment succour was at hand; but more surrounded the false Aconite, heaping upon his coward head every epithet of hatred, contempt, and scorn.

"A pretty mayor, to beat a woman!"

"A wretch for whom hanging was too great a treat!"

"He might have got drunk, and no great harm done; but to beat his wife!"

"Will you buy the cloak, now?" again asked the devil of Tobias. "Will you buy it now?"

"She wanted her match," mused the true Tobias, unconscious of the question.

"Will you buy the cloak *now?*" asked the devil in a louder voice.

"Not this time," replied the satisfied Mayor.

A profligate, a sot, and a coward; such was the character of the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner, a virtuous, temperate, and a tolerably tender husband. Strange temptations beset the spirit of Tobias. It was, indeed, a trying fate to be doomed to bear the ignominy of wicked deeds, when he was pure as snow; to face the looks of public contempt, and then to turn his eyes within, seeking for light in his own bosom. We will not disguise his fitful weakness. At times he had his misgivings; he almost thought it best to strike a bargain for the cloak, so frequently pressed upon him, and thus enveloping himself in the outside of virtuous appearance, to obtain the sweet privilege of sinning in secret. Weeks passed on, and Tobias performed his functions as magistrate; but, alas! the glory of his office was departed. The homage paid to him was forced and sullen—he was no longer the oracle to his reverential fellow townsmen, but uttered his decrees to deaf ears and turned-up noses. He had no consolation—none: yes, he had the approving voice of his own conscience; and how it happened we know not, but of late his wife, Dame Bridget, had become as mild, as sweetly complying, as even in her early days of budding love. Never, after the labours of the day, did Tobias return to his home that he saw not a well-filled ale-jug waiting him on the board.

Time passed, and the fiend ceased to tempt Tobias; who, yearning for the former confidence of his fellow citizens, meditated upon many schemes, whereby he might again possess their ancient love—their old familiar respect. He at length decided on the plan; he would give a banquet, a most magnificent feast to his equals of Hole-cum-Corner, and have an ox or two roasted

for the vulgar. It was a foolish thought; but Tobias really hoped to dine away his evil name—to drown his spotted reputation in a sea of drink. He had determined upon this politic act, when great news rang through the town of Hole-cum-Corner. A foreign prince, an awful Spaniard, in whose veins ran the very best blood-royal, had arrived in Britain on business matrimonial. We have searched the pages of the Chroniclers, but found not his name; in the history of Hole-cum-Corner he is simply yet impressively marked.

Now the Hidalgo, proposing to behold all the commercial wonders of our wonderful land, could not, in his progress through the country, but visit the dolls'-eyes manufactory at Hole-cum-Corner. In the true spirit of English hospitality, all our manufacturing secrets were laid open to him, nor could the men of Hole-cum-Corner be less complaisant than their fellow-Britons. Here was an opportunity for Tobias—a golden chance, not for the world itself to be lost. In brief, the Mayor summoned a meeting of the townsfolk, and with tears in his eyes begged that all little differences of opinion as to politics and morals might, for the time, be laid aside; that all bickerings might be forgotten in the general endeavour to pay a hospitable welcome to the arriving Spaniard. The address of Tobias had, it was plain, some effect upon his prejudiced hearers, all anxious for the reputation of Hole-cum-Corner; but when the Mayor concluded his speech with a promise to feast the whole town at his own private cost, the hall rang with acclamations, and there were at least twenty worthy souls who declared it to be their opinion that "Toby Aconite was an honest man after all."

The rest of that day did Tobias employ airing himself in the streets of Hole-cum-Corner. It was so delicious to meet, as he was wont to meet, old friends; to return the smile, the bow, to exchange the merry greeting. Again did Tobias feel himself the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner.

The church bells rang in the happy day; shops were closed; every man, woman, and child in their best clothes, and with their blithest looks: fifty maidens scattered roses in the path of the magnificent stranger, and a thousand voices rent the sky, at the first glimpse of his right royal beard. The Spaniard alighted at the Mansion-house, and though he spoke not a word of English, expressed himself enraptured with his reception. At which Tobias Aconite placed his hand upon his heart, and upon his honour declared that day to be the very happiest of his whole existence. The Spaniard and his followers having partaken of a slight repast of brawn, brown bread, and ale,—a public-spirited economical townsman calculated that each man

consumed a pound and a half of meat, a twopenny loaf, and two quarts of liquor,—were conducted by the Mayor and other authorities to inspect the public works and buildings of Hole-cum-Corner. Thus moving in slow procession down Prigapple-lane, the Spaniard was shown the stocks, at which curious instance of man's ingenuity he expressed his most intense delight. He was continually heard to murmur as to himself, "Great English! wonderful people!" a truth translated by the schoolmaster of Hole-cum-Corner, who, in his childhood wrecked off Cadiz, had served three years as turnspit in the most Holy Inquisition. Having duly inspected the stocks, the Spaniard was conducted two miles out of the town, to Hempseed Common, to view an antique gibbet, one of the highly-prized, most sacred, and most venerable institutions of Hole-cum-Corner. Here, again, he exclaimed "Great English! wonderful people!" Returning to the town, the illustrious visitor was conducted to the cake-manufactory—(we have alluded to these cakes in an early part of this legend)—where was exhibited to him the whole process of cake-making, at which, as before, he declared himself sufficiently astonished, and biting a cake hot from the oven, again exclaimed, "Great English! wonderful people!"

The royal Spaniard was, after this, shown over the vast establishment of Squint and Leer, inventors and makers of dolls'-eyes. Here a most gratifying surprise awaited the royal guest, for he was presented, not only with the freedom of the town, in a handsome pearl box, but with a document that enabled him to set up as dolls'-eyes maker in any part of England; a privilege which he declared to be the most flattering mark of national liberality and national affection. He avowed that in the whole course of his life he would never look into the eyes of a doll without thinking of the worthy people of Hole-cum-Corner.

To return to Tobias. He had had his trials, but he was supremely happy that day. However, his crowning triumph was at hand. One o'clock, the dinner-hour, was fast approaching, and then he would usher the royal Spaniard to the banquet-room: then and there he would so smile himself into the good graces of his most illustrious guest, that, should the Hidalgo wed the virgin queen—(by this it would seem that the time of the legend was that of Elizabeth, though we consider it to be much earlier,)—he, Tobias, would have knighthood as a thing of course. The heart of the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner beat high as he preceded the Spaniard up the three steps of the Mansion-house. It was remarkable, that the illustrious guest, as he crossed the threshold, observed, that "the weather was hot, but that

probably it would be cooler in the evening." This being translated to the Mayor, he bowed, and said he should like to see the face of that man who would dare to doubt it. Another moment, and the Spaniard would reach the dining-hall; he, however, stopped short, and as a particular favour requested that he might be permitted to wash his hands.

The Spaniard retired, and for one minute, and only one, did Tobias quit his post, the door of an ante-room through which the magnificent foreigner must pass. The door opened—the Spaniard appeared,—but, oh, horror! there, bowing him along, was another Tobias—no doubt the self-same drunkard of the highway; the knave who cudgelled Bridget; the curse and libel of Aconite's life. Again did Tobias feel that he was invisible, and thus he followed the crowd into the dining-hall—the demon, the ghost of himself, smirking and bowing, and looking loftily around, doing the needful honours to the mighty foreigner.

Who shall tell the anguish at the heart of Tobias, as he saw his accursed similitude take his station behind the chair of the Spaniard; beheld him smiled upon by his guest, and at length, with gentle, courteous violence, forced into a seat beside the great man?

The dinner—would we could do fitting honour to the storks, cranes, swans, porpoises, and all other delicacies of those primitive days—passed off with abounding content. Happiness glistened in the greasy face of many a denizen of Hole-cum-Corner; and Tobias, invisible as he was, was tortured by the praises that fell from many a former enemy, made his foe by the demon at the top of the table. "Forget and forgive," cried one townsman, as he tossed off his cup; "Tobias is a noble fellow, when all's done."—"His heart's in the right place," remarked another, "for he has dined us like kings." These were flattering words, yet were they daggers to Tobias, fearful of some new prank on the part of his diabolical representative—some infamous act, that should again plunge him twenty fathom deep in obloquy.

There was a pause; and though Tobias felt himself a shade he sweated again, as his demon likeness rose and begged to give a toast—the health of the Spaniard. This the false Tobias did in a speech of unwrinkled eloquence; dwelt upon every known and unknown virtue of the princely guest, with such fervour, such passionate admiration, that the whole meeting were breathless with astonishment, and, the oration ended, more than one townsman declared the mayor was not a man, but an angel. Now, indeed, the true mayor would have been too well reconciled to

fortune, had the demon disappeared, and he could have asserted his own likeness.

At this moment, a face turned from the table, and looking up at Tobias, asked in a low voice, "Will you buy the cloak now?"

"No!" exclaimed the true Tobias, startled at his own voice; while shouts of "Silence!" rang through the hall.

The Spaniard rose—stroked his beard, put his hand upon his heart, said at least ten words, cast his eyes to the ceiling, and sat down again, amidst a torrent of applause.

Still Tobias fixed his eyes upon his infernal resemblance, still he—oh! was there ever such villany—such inhospitable felony? Whilst the Spaniard was on his legs, the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner seated beside him, took up a knife, and severed a bright blue ribbon circling the Spaniard's neck, a ribbon from which depended the order of the Zebra, an order composed of richest diamonds, the stripes in rubies. Of this magnificent jewel did the demon-mayor possess himself, and, as if nothing at all had happened, put it in his right-hand breeches-pocket!

Faithful Alonzo! Intrepid Ximenes! Stout-hearted Gonzago! Valorous Toboso! Ye, all chamberlains to the princely Spaniard, saw the felony, and without a word drew your ferraras, and fell upon the mayor. In an instant the order of the Zebra was snatched from the culprit's pocket, and his guilt made manifest to the assembly; whereupon some called for halters, whilst some insisted on a stake and hurdle.

The false Mayor was consigned to gaol, and the true Tobias hugged himself on his invisibility.

The Spaniard took horse for London, and as a particular favour requested the head and quarters of the Mayor of Hole-cum-Corner, which request was in the most handsome manner granted by the queen then reigning. Execution was done upon the Demon functionary. The real, invisible Tobias beheld the execution. As the culprit was led to the block, the old familiar voice of the tempter asked the true Mayor,

"Will you buy the cloak now?"

Here was a dilemma! If Tobias refused, the demon would vanish, and he be made to suffer for his crime. He paused!

"Will you buy the cloak now?" was repeated.

"No," answered the stout Tobias. He preferred the consciousness of innocence though stained with the odium of guilt, to the outside appearance of virtue with inner hypocrisy. "No," repeated Tobias, and he instantly expected the demon to vanish. To his surprise, however, the false Tobias was beheaded, and most scrupulously quartered.

From that moment, the tempter appeared not to Tobias, who clothed himself in weeds, put a scallop in his cap, and like a virtuous pilgrim, passed beyond the seas.

A story ran that Gaffer Nimmington, the victim of Tobias, had sold himself to the fiend for revenge upon the Mayor, who, in his turn, was punished for his hasty sentence upon Gaffer—a sentence passed upon appearance!

Tobias died far, far away; yet was it the faith of many generations, that, in the likeness of a gander, their ancient Mayor for generations watched over and protected the town of Hole-cum-Corner

THE ROMANCE OF A KEY-HOLE.

CHAPTER I.

"Past twelve o'clock," wailed an old, old watchman as he crawled along Bishopsgate Within; the gusty wind and pattering rain drowning the modest cry of the venerable guard. "Past twelve o'clock," he moaned; and the wind rising, and the shower thickening, the watchman paused, gathered up his rheumatic joints, now lowered his lantern to the pavement, now raised it towards the mud-black sky, and finding all things safe, turned himself round and hobbled to his box. In sooth, it was to pay a high, an undeserved compliment to the prowess of any known burglar, to suppose that on such a night he would leave his down, goose-feather, flock, or straw, to force a door or pick a lock. The most prejudiced thief, peeping from his casement on such a night, might, without shame or remorse, with not a blush upon his cheek, have resolved to go to bed. In such a night, sure we are that virtue and wealth might safely sleep with the door on the latch; nevertheless, the folks of Bishopsgate Within, from the mere force of habit, drew their bolts and turned their locks. It had been well for Jeremy Dunbrown had his door been barred—better still, had it not been locked.

The watchman was ensconced in his box, asleep and happy. Blessed Morpheus! Thou whose ample cloak wraps the beggar and the king, the slave and the tyrant, thou who dost stand between the fierce wrath of man and man, thou who at night callest off the pack of worrying cares from the hunted wretch, and comest to him with hope among the straw,—thou didst visit Barnaby Argus, watchman of Bishopsgate, in his deal-board castle, making him, in soft delicious dreams, no less a potentate than beadle of the ward. The coat of squalid drab had ripened into regal purple—the greasy hat was bound with gold, and jutted boldly out at three corners—the old crab-stick had shot

up to a staff, surmounted by the silver knob of high authority —and, walking at the head of fifty boys and girls, Barnaby Argus, watchman, heard not the wind, felt not the rain—so weather-proof did dreaming fancy make him. The beadle strutted and exulted, but the watchman remained a *caput mortuum* in the box.

Past twelve o'clock, and—oh! shame to the ripe manhood of fifty—Jeremy Dunbrown, his senses muffled in strong drink, sought his home. Let the truth be said, though the shame fall upon Jeremy: Dunbrown was drunk; yea, so drunk, that unassisted he had not that night approached his household gods, at the hour we write of, fast asleep; for Jeremy, having the street-door key in his pocket, kept not the *lares* sitting up. Dunbrown was a bachelor; hence, it was his peculiar boast at the club, that he kept nobody waiting for him save the fleas.

We have inferred that Jeremy wound not his way down Bishopsgate alone. No: great is the beneficence of Bacchus, who numbers in his train thousands of little lacqueys, to sober eyes invisible, whose duty it is to lead the votaries of their purple master safely home. The water-drinker could not see the jolly little satyr with its small kid hoofs clattering along the stones of Bishopsgate, keeping Jeremy Dunbrown from posts and gutters—now steadying his right leg, now the left—now flinging a vine or hop-plant over him, pulling him back lest he fall upon his nose—Jeremy all the while smiling, and uttering half words from the corner of his mouth, in acknowledgment of the benevolence. These bacchanal fairies, thousands though there be—for were there not, how would frail mortals find the door?—are not distinguishable by the profane sober; nor are they to be seen by the small drinker, by the petty rascal who simpers over a gill and thinks himself Silenus. No, no; a man must labour in many vintages to be worthy of such a body-guard. Now we can assure the world that Jeremy Dunbrown was that man.

Jeremy, aided by his good genius, shuffled down the empty street, the wind blowing, and the rain falling. At length Jeremy reached the iron rail that skirted his ancient home. "All's right," said Jeremy; and, as he spoke, the vinous fairy quitted its charge (leaving it in order to see safely to his door the Reverend Doctor Magnum, at that moment much debilitated by a recent argument at Alderman Bung's on Hebrew roots).

"All's right," repeated Jeremy, and he laid his flattened palm against that consecrated piece of wood, his own house-door. "All's right," and Jeremy, with a smile sent from his very heart, a smile flickering in his soddened face, drew from his

right-hand breeches' pocket the street-door key. Ten minutes more, and Jeremy Dunbrown would be stretched between his household sheets.

Jeremy, with the key in his hand, sought to turn the lock: it was very odd—very strange—rather annoying, but Jeremy could not find the key-hole. Jeremy smiled, growled with fixed teeth, scratched with the key all over the door, still—where was the key-hole? Then Jeremy stood as upright as circumstances would permit—coughed—and, grasping the key anew, made a reckless dash at the door, as if, trusting to the guidance of his good genius, he hoped to find the aperture; when the key, struck by the violence from his hand, rang upon the door-step, and Jeremy, muttering objectionable oaths, dropped upon his knees and groped about the wet mud for the lost treasure. "It's all right," said Jeremy, when, having searched for ten minutes, he again rose upon his legs with the recovered key, which—so great was his presence of mind—he carefully cleaned with the tail of his coat. "Mud may clog the wards," said Jeremy, with, all things considered, superhuman sagacity. "Now then—very droll —very odd,"—and Jeremy continued to scrape the key, as he thought, over every inch of the door—"exceeding odd—never knew such thing in born days—remarkable—strange to a degree —ha! ha! capital joke—capit—d——n the key!"

Such was the broken soliloquy of Dunbrown, as he stood perspiring at his own door. Again he paused from his toil—looked up the street, down it, and again resolved by one vigorous effort to turn the lock. Again in silence did he run the key over the door; breathlessly he searched for the desired opening; then his hand fell to his side, and on a sudden he stood convinced for once and for ever.

"I see it," cried Jeremy Dunbrown,—"I see it—the dishonesty of the times!—some damned thief has stolen the key-hole!"

As Jeremy said this, his legs slid from under him, and he came—as his good luck would have it—softly down upon the door-step. He was scarcely well down, ere his eyes were closed; and, snoring hard, with the unappropriated key griped in his right hand, Jeremy Dunbrown sat in the shadow of his own double-locked door—sat and slept.

CHAPTER II.

WHILST Jeremy slumbers on the outside, let us speak of the tenants within the house. Peggy Mavis was the orphan daughter of the late Peter Mavis, late partner of Jeremy Dunbrown. When death was about to dissolve the firm of Mavis and Dunbrown, braziers, of Bishopsgate Within, Peter, among other bequests to Jeremy, left him the pretty Peggy to cherish, educate, and, when the genial time should come, to marry her to some well-deserving man. Dunbrown had hitherto been faithful to his trust. Little Peggy had been the pet of the household; and, for her education, she had nought to fear comparison with the oldest hands at preserves and pickles in all Bishopsgate—nor was she wanting in the lighter and less important accomplishments of reading and writing. Peggy, at the time we write, was in her nineteenth year, and was only induced to think of marriage by an accident that happened to a female friend a twelvemonth younger than herself. "Who'd have thought of Nancy Spicer being a wife?—and I'm older than she!" exclaimed the artless Peggy to Mrs. Bridleton, her deep revolving aunt, who looked significantly at Jeremy Dunbrown, who looked again. His last important duty towards the daughter of his old partner remained to be done; he must, and speedily, marry her to some well-deserving man. Whereupon, Jeremy, with comprehensive thoughts, considered the separate claims of all his friends and acquaintance; and—doubtless to his own surprise—became fixed in the belief, that of all the excellent and deserving men upon his long roll of associates, there was none, so far at least as Peggy was concerned, so excellent and so deserving as himself. It was four o'clock on a Thursday afternoon, when Jeremy Dunbrown came to this conclusion; and as early as the next morning he startled the neighbourhood of Bishopsgate Within, with his Sunday suit—his Sabbath wig! Peggy Mavis saw nothing extraordinary in the change, but Mrs. Bridleton prepared herself for some mischance.

Jeremy Dunbrown had taken his own consent to marry Peggy Mavis; yet could he not wrench himself from his darling club—his nightly haunt for five-and-twenty years. True it is, he sometimes thought that courtship at home might have its merits—still he was convinced, by long and sweet experience, that flip, as mixed at the Horns, was excellent. He liked Peggy, but he

adored his glass: one might be a passing preference, the other was a fixed principle. Hence, though for the last ten days Jeremy had smiled determinedly upon Peggy, had resolved to make her Mrs. Dunbrown, he had devoted no especial evening to the furtherance of his suit; nay, save by his eyes—and we grieve to say that their new expression was lost upon the ignorance of the girl (poor thing! let it be remembered she was only nineteen)—he had uttered no syllable of his love. To say the truth, Jeremy thought there was no need to talk about the matter; he had only to name the trifle to Peggy, who would of course jump very high at the offer. It was with this comfortable conviction that Jeremy went on the night of our history to his club—it was with this belief that he staggered down Bishopsgate—and, after his industrious yet disappointed search for the key-hole, it was with a confused, dreamy sense of his security, that he sank upon his cold door-stone, beneath the chamber-window of his lady-love.

A quarter of an hour had Jeremy lost in oblivion, when passengers approached his door: they had probably passed the sleeper, but for his snores. "A watchman, no doubt," said one of the party, halting before Jeremy.

"Oh, yes," said a second, "the old rascal, Barnaby;" that scandalised functionary being at the time asleep in his own box. "Ha! ha!" and the speaker, having scrutinised the countenance of Jeremy, at once proclaimed his person—"if it isn't Old Candlestick—yes, Dunbrown the brazier!"

"You know him?—where does he live?" asked the third.

"Where? why, man, this is his house; let us knock 'em up, and—softly, boys, what's this?" and the inquirer drew the key from the hand of Dunbrown. "Now, lads, let's put bold faces on the matter; we'll have a carouse."

"Ha! ha! a carouse!" cried the second speaker.

"You'll never enter the house?" exclaimed the third.

"All right," observed the man who had elected himself leader of the party, and who, as he spoke, unlocked the door, and turned it on its "harmonious hinge." A light burned dimly in the passage. "Bring in the body," cried the leader; and his companions took up the insensible Jeremy, and, following their captain, carried the master of the house into his back-parlour, and laid him upon his hearth. "Now, gentlemen," said the leader, taking the poker, with an arm of authority, and stirring the remnant of a fire—"now, gentlemen, make yourselves at home." Saying this, the speaker squared his arms upon the table, and looked loftily around him.

CHAPTER III.

AND here let us endeavour to make known to the reader the persons of the men who, waiving all common formalities, had fixed themselves at the fireside of Jeremy Dunbrown. Sampson Piebald, the last speaker, was a person whose early intercourse with the world had lessened that respect for its men and manners required of well-ordered minds; for he looked upon the whole earth as only a place to take his ease in—and for the people dwelling upon it, they were to be considered good or good-for-nothing only so far as they flattered his prejudices or contributed to his pleasures. We know not whether this is an original character; it was, whatever may be said, that of Sampson Piebald. Nature had, for once, written the mind in his face—a work of ingenuousness, which nature in her goodness rarely permits herself to do; for, were it her constant practice, how would poor rogues ever become rich ones? We know the common story runs, that nature has peculiar visages for poets, philosophers, statesmen, warriors, and so forth: we do not believe it: we have seen a slack-wire dancer with the face of a great pious bard—an usurer with the legendary features of a Socrates—a passer of bad money very like a Chancellor of the Exchequer—and a carcass-butcher at Whitechapel so resembling Napoleon, that Prince Talleyrand, suddenly beholding him, burst into tears at the similitude. Physiognomists and heralds are, in certain cases, equally courteous; first prove yourself a great man, and the feature-mongers will instantly award you eyes and mouth to match: become rich, and, though you cannot swear to your own name, you shall have as great a choice of arms as Briareus. Now Sampson Piebald looked the man he was; the jolly, careless, good-tempered animal that nature made him, and, having made, sent forth like a young ostrich, callow from the shell. The tailor—nature's journeyman, sometimes her master—had not, at the time of our history, done much for Sampson: his coat, albeit once a bright spring green, was now in the autumn of its colour; the glory of his crimson waistcoat was faded—the squalid copper truth revealed itself from the specious seeming of gold lace; and the long flashy cravat was of the colour of the Bourbon flag at the close of a hard campaign. Nor have we told the worst; for much we fear that another happier man had worn away the bloom from these habiliments ere they descended from the clothesman's

pegs to Sampson. What of that? Piebald wore them with an air that made them originally his own; his triumphant looks seemed to put a gloss upon departed yesterdays. His hat upon the head of another man would have been a signal of distress—with him, it appeared alike to challenge and defy scrutiny. "The hat, my boy," Sampson once replied to some familiarity passed upon his beaver—"the hat, whatever it may be, is in itself nothing—makes nothing—goes for nothing: but, be sure of it, every thing in life depends upon the cock of the hat." Such was Piebald's philosophy; a school which we incline to believe contains many disciples. For how many men—we put it to your own experience, reader—have made their way through the thronging crowds that beset fortune, not by the innate worth and excellence of their hats, but simply, as Sampson Piebald has it,—by the "cock of their hats?" The cock's all.

The next of the party was the son of Josiah and Mary Mandril, and had been christened Robert, which name his young companions in their social pleasantry had abridged to Bob: he was a young man possessing a high recommendation to Piebald—he paid the fullest deference to Sampson, whom he justly considered to be the greatest example of a man. "A quick lad," Piebald would say, "with an excellent judgment." It is to be expected, from the good taste of Bob, that, in the important concerns of dress, he vigilantly followed his master, and, it may be added, with very creditable success; both were as two counterfeit guineas, whereof one has lost nearly all the gilding, whilst one is only gone at the edges. Bob was not handsome—that is, not regularly handsome; for his nose was broken, and he had a look that ill-nature might denominate a squint. It must therefore be evident that his beauty, if any, was the beauty of expression.

The third and last self-invited guest at the hearth of Dunbrown, was a tall, comely young man, more modestly habited than either of his companions; though his coat was, in its threadbareness, fit company for theirs—and his pockets were blasted with the like barrenness. He, however, appeared ill at ease in his position, and urged his friends to quit the house.

"Not yet, Val," answered Sampson Piebald, "not yet; I tell you, if I guess rightly, here's bed, board, and lodging for us: an empty stomach makes a bold face. What will you have for supper?"

"Supper!" echoed Valentine, for such was his name, incredulous of the probable luxury.

"Would you like a chine of beef?—a cut of haunch?—a turkey?—a roast pig?—a buttock?—a——"

We cannot even guess at the number of offered dishes contemplated by the epicurean Piebald; and we know not to what length his temptings might have proceeded, had he not paused at the sudden opening of the door. It was but a second, and a figure clothed in white, carrying a lighted candle, stepped in, sent forth an awful shriek, and fell upon the floor. Mrs. Bridleton had heard the street-door open, and fearing that Jeremy was too far gone to remember the dangerous properties of fire, had dared the coldness of the night and descended to the parlour.

Still Mrs. Bridleton remained upon the floor. After a moment's preparation, she screamed "Murder!"

"By no means, ma'am," said Sampson Piebald, in the most insinuating tones.

"Thieves!" cried Mrs. Bridleton, correcting what from Sampson's politeness she was compelled to consider a mistake—"thieves!"

"Nothing at all of the sort," said the placid Mandril, in the open-hearted voice of honesty.

"What do you want here?" was the interrogation boldly put by Mrs. Bridleton; "neither murderers nor thieves—what brought you here, then?"

"Ma'am," said Piebald—and taking the candle from the table, for Mrs. Bridleton's had been extinguished in her fall—and courteously waving his eloquent hat, for he made it eloquent by his action, towards the body of the brazier—"Ma'am, we've brought home Mr. Dunbrown."

CHAPTER IV.

"A BEAST!" exclaimed Mrs. Bridleton, shrinking from the mass of enjoyment upon the hearth—"a beast!"

"Very true, ma'am," said the sympathising Piebald.

"Not to be contradicted," observed Mr. Mandril.

"This comes of the club!" cried Mrs. Bridleton—"this comes of the Jacobites. Politics, forsooth! Only a cloak for drunkenness!"

"'Tis a large cloak," remarked Piebald, shortly.

"But, perhaps, gentlemen," and here Mrs. Bridleton affected a look of humility, "perhaps I stand in the presence of Thistles?"

Piebald saw from the woman's manner that she attached some importance to a club so named, and with his quick wisdom

availed himself of his position. Flourishing his hat, and making a profound bow, Piebald answered, "Madam, we *are* Thistles."

Mrs. Bridleton took a large supply of breath, placed her hands upon her hips, and her nightcap shaking like a sheet in the wind, advanced towards the self-dubbed Thistles.

"And ar'n't you a set of idle, infamous, rebellious varlets—a pack of villains that don't know when they've got a good king—a band of treason-mongers that should ride on hurdles——"

"Hush!" said the politic Piebald; and with mysterious looks he grasped the extended right hand of Mrs. Bridleton, and then, sinking on one knee, asked, "when—when did wretched man sue of female loveliness, and sue——"

"Sir!" cried Mrs. Bridleton—and then added, in a temperate voice, "explain yourself."

"We are betrayed," said Sampson, to the astonishment of his companions; "the Thistles are betrayed; by the ambition, the vanity of one man—and there he lies!"

"Jeremy!" exclaimed Mrs. Bridleton.

"Jeremy has been the ruin of us. We can trust you—yes, madam, I see by your enlarged forehead, your glittering eye, your resolute lip, that you are a woman above your sex. It seems that you already guessed the object of the Thistles: you were right. We had sworn the downfall of the present throne; nobody knew it, and perhaps nobody ever would have known it, but for our gallant yet mistaken leader there."

"An old fool!" cried Mrs. Bridleton.

"As you please, madam," cried Piebald, "as you please. Have you seen the fatal instrument?"

"Mercy on us! what do you mean?" asked the fearful matron.

"Ale and brandy overcame his discretion, and, in an evil moment—with strangers about us, enemies to the Pretender, as they dare to call him—Jeremy vaunted that he had it ready—all ready in the house!"

"More gunpowder work!" screamed Mrs. Bridleton.

"Calm your fears, ma'am—calm your fears; no gunpowder, but a patent—a patent from the Chevalier, appointing the well-beloved Jeremy Dunbrown to be——"

"Lord Mayor?" asked the woman.

"Warming-pan-maker to the King," answered Piebald, with solemnity—"yes, to King James the Third."

"King James, indeed!" said Mrs. Bridleton; "he's pretty far from the throne as yet, I think."

"Possibly, ma'am, possibly. Still, the Chevalier's appointment to the warming-pan showed him to be a provident candi-

date for the honour. Well, madam, in this terrible crisis, nothing remained for us but to protect the illustrious person of our chairman."

"Damned thieves!" growled Jeremy, in his sleep.

"We carried him off," continued Piebald, deaf to the unconscious insinuation of Dunbrown, "ere the watch could be called—we bore him to the door, and were about to rouse the household, when Jeremy revived for an instant—'Don't disturb that excellent woman,' he said, 'here's the key.'"

"Stole the key-hole," drawled Dunbrown.

"And all this comes of stupid politics," cried Mrs. Bridleton, "of what I've heard him call his principles. A man who hardly knows one word from another, to talk of principles!"

"It must be owned," said Piebald, meekly, "that Jeremy owes but little to his learning; 'tis therefore, madam, not impossible that when he spoke of a principle he meant a warming-pan. I've known such men."

"And what's to be done with the brute?" asked Mrs. Bridleton, shuddering all over at the bacchanal aspect of Jeremy.

"Might I advise," observed Piebald, very courteously, "I think it would be best to lay him upon his bed for a few hours; then he may be sufficiently recovered to mount horse, and——"

"Jeremy mount a horse!" cried Mrs. Bridleton, smiling at the ludicrous image presenting itself. "I'd as soon set a dragon on a pillion."

"Somehow we must conduct him to the sea-side, then take boat for France," said Sampson.

"And what's to become of the business?" asked Mrs. Bridleton, in despair.

"The god of battles," answered Piebald, heroically, "will dispose of that."

"And such a business! Hang politics!" said Mrs. Bridleton.

"Infernal thieves!" again snored Dunbrown.

"Go you before, ma'am," said Piebald; "Mandril, take hold of his legs."

With little ceremony, Dunbrown was carried up stairs by Sampson and his companion, Mrs. Bridleton lighting the way, and exclaiming against the folly and brutishness of all male kind. Having laid the royal warming-pan-maker upon the bed, Piebald turned to the attending Mrs. Bridleton, and, with a benevolent smile, asked, "Shall we undress him, ma'am?"

"Pah!" cried Mrs. Bridleton, and, clapping down the light, fluttered out of the room.

Being by themselves, Mandril looked at Dunbrown, then at Piebald. "Better let him roost in his feathers," observed Bob

Piebald, placing a fore-finger to his nose, silently nodded assent. He then whispered to Mandril, "Keep it up about the treason, and, I warrant ye, we'll have a supper. How lucky!" and Sampson indulged in a low chuckle—"how lucky that we fell among the Thistles!"

"Gentlemen," cried the faint voice of Mrs. Bridleton, who had descended only a few stairs, and had perhaps some feminine doubts of her visitors.

"We come, madam—we come," said Sampson, within; "put another pillow under his excellent head—unbutton his waistcoat—take off his wig, Mandril. Does—" and here Piebald called in a louder voice to Mrs. Bridleton, without—"does our estimable friend, Dunbrown, sleep in a night-cap, ma'am?"

"It's on the chair, at the left side," answered Mrs. Bridleton, still on the stairs in cold and darkness.

"And so it is," was the corroborative reply of Piebald, who in a minute issued orders to Mandril. "Take the light, Bob—I'll follow."

Mandril quickly appeared to Mrs. Bridleton with the candle, and, with Piebald at his heels, the party returned to the parlour, where Valentine had remained—alone? asks the reader. No; not alone.

"Peggy!" exclaimed Mrs. Bridleton, who thought she saw a sudden confusion in the face of her niece; for the young lady was really found in the society of Valentine. "Peggy!" repeated the aunt, "you here!"

"I thought I heard you scream, aunt—I thought some accident had happened—and I ventured from my room—and found this gentleman, who——"

"Who, I trust," added Valentine, "has succeeded in dispelling any alarm—that—that—" and the young man stammered.

Mrs. Bridleton had, in early life, been entrapped—as she would call it—into marriage, after five minutes' resolute talk on the part of a gentleman who had great estates somewhere in Kilkenny, of which, to the day of his death, he was shamefully kept out—and she, therefore, with a quick remembrance of her own calamity, had the tenderest regard for the safety of her niece.

"Peggy!" shouted the aunt, "go to your room." And the niece timidly obeyed.

As Peggy left the parlour, the bell of Bishopsgate church tolled one.

CHAPTER V.

"It's very late," said Mrs. Bridleton, taking up the candle, and looking in the faces of the company; "very late."

"And hardly any fire," remarked Piebald, who for the second time plunged the poker among the dying ashes.

"It's something, though," said Mandril, as he sat and stretched his legs, "it's something to have the shelter of a roof."

"Even if 'twasn't as good as it is," said Piebald, "wouldn't it be rank cowardice to desert Jeremy—a Thistle like Dunbrown—in the hour of peril?"

"Peril, gentlemen, peril!" cried Mrs. Bridleton,—"why, you never mean—oh! those wicked, stupid politics!—this comes of people having principles!"

"Well, ma'am," and here Piebald looked uncommonly solemn, "for good or for bad, the die is cast, ma'am. Jeremy said this very night that we had thousands of friends in the north—let's hope for the best. You may not agree in our sentiments—still they are the sentiments of our conviction, ma'am. If we are rebels, we are honest rebels, ma'am. So respect our honesty, ma'am, and give us something for supper."

"Supper at one in the morning!" exclaimed Mrs. Bridleton.

"Better late than never," answered Sampson Piebald.

"Not but what we'd rather starve than put you a bit out of the way," remarked Mandril.

"Anything will serve; I would be content with a gammon of bacon, a few dozen of eggs, and sundry quarts of ale." Thus spoke Piebald.

"Yes," said Valentine, for the first time chiming in with the humour of his companions, "men who may next week be required to lay their heads upon the block, should learn to despise the luxuries of the palate."

"True, very true," cried Piebald; who, heaving a deep sigh, and looking resignedly at Mrs. Bridleton, added, "say bacon and eggs."

Vainly did Mrs. Bridleton dwell upon the lateness of the hour—upon the untimeliness of eating and drinking—upon the impossibility of preparing any meal worthy of such guests; they would hear no excuse—they would take no denial; and it was almost with vexatious tears in her eyes that the worthy woman descended to the kitchen to prepare a repast for the enemies

of the house of Hanover. The historian might register the fact among the strange accidents of real life, that the supper was—bacon and eggs.

"A nosegay, madam—may I die the death of a traitor, but 'tis a perfect nosegay: my fainting appetite revives at the odour," cried Piebald, as the well-filled dish was placed upon the table. Sampson's face grew radiant as he eyed the hissing contents: taking a fork and therewith lifting an egg into his mouth, he smacked his lips, winked at Mrs. Bridleton, and chuckled—"Ha! ha! laid by a bird of Paradise."

"And cooked by an angel," concluded Mandril; Mrs. Bridleton receiving the compliment with the worst possible grace.

The party were about to address themselves to the food, when the sagacious Piebald laid down his knife and fork, and putting his right hand to his heart, smilingly showed his teeth to Mrs. Bridleton, saying "Ale!"

Mrs. Bridleton rose to answer the appeal so delicately put, but was detained by Sampson.

"No, madam," said he, "your delicate frame is unequal to the task. You bring up ale? and for three of us! My dear madam, you know not what you'd do. Mandril, do you bring up the barrel;" and, to the great dissatisfaction of Mrs. Bridleton, Mandril insisted upon attending her to the cellar, gallantly remarking that not for the whole world would they overtask her feminine powers.

"This will do to begin with," said Mandril, returning, and placing a huge tankard of liquor upon the table; "and now I know the way to the barrel, we needn't trouble the lady again." And with this, the speaker gave the key of the cellar to Piebald, who, gracefully inclining his head towards the astonished matron, put it in his pocket.

"The key of the cellar is the last and the highest trust friend can bestow on friend. The gift," continued Piebald, "is worthy of the great patriot whom we have this night snatched from a painful, a cruel death. The bacon is delicious."

"My own curing," said Mrs. Bridleton. "But, for Mr. Dunbrown—you surely never mean to say that if he's caught he'll be killed?"

"Hung a long time, no doubt, ma'am," cried Piebald, laying his knife upon a rasher.

"To be sure, sir: but, think of my feelings, sir. Mr. Dunbrown—poor, foolish man!—If he is, as you call him, a patriot, he'll not be——"

"Smoked—smoked to a nicety," cried Piebald, resolved to think more of the pig than the patriot.

"What am I to understand, gentlemen? What's to be done? Is Jeremy really in danger?" cried Mrs. Bridleton.

"Danger!" answered Piebald; "once for all, ma'am, and to satisfy you, if Jeremy Dunbrown's caught he'll be hanged as sure as——"

"Eggs," said Mandril, and he advanced his plate for a new supply.

"Pray, madam," asked Valentine, "do you know if Mr. Dunbrown has made his will?"

"To be sure he has: Peggy and I come in for everything," replied Mrs. Bridleton.

"That's fortunate, in case of the worst," said Valentine; "for, probably, madam, you are not aware that the property of traitors, if no will be found, is confiscated to the government?"

"You never mean to say," cried Mrs. Bridleton, "that his blessed Majesty would seize upon the shop, and sell the goodwill?"

"Madam," said Piebald, "the offence of Dunbrown is the highest high-treason. Consider—to accept office under a usurper! To receive a patent of warming-pan-maker to a Stuart! Why, ma'am, it's an office only next to that of prime minister: nay, in some countries, the minister and the warming-pan are both as one."

The simplicity of Mrs. Bridleton—her utter ignorance of the establishment and discipline of courts — made her a ready believer of the words of Piebald, whose confident look and earnest voice might have cheated a less credulous listener.

"What's to become of us?" exclaimed Mrs. Bridleton. "Hanged——and with such an excellent business!"

"To be drawn and quartered," cried Piebald—"and with such a barrel in the cellar. Ha! madam, death to men like us has no terrors. We may quit the world without a tear—we are poor, uncared for;—but to die, and leave such ale as this!—Bob, fill again," and the pathetic speaker handed the empty flagon and the key of the cellar to his obedient fellow.

"Still," said Valentine, "all is not lost. We must, to-morrow, convey our excellent friend into the country; then watch our opportunity, and, if fortune be against us, carry him to France."

"And what's to become of me—of the shop?" cried Mrs. Bridleton.

"In early life, madam," said Piebald, with inimitable impudence, "I served a brazier. Command me!"

Mrs. Bridleton threw a quick glance at Piebald, whose complexion was considerably improved by the ale, and whose eyes glowed and twinkled with light borrowed from the liquor.

Again Piebald, putting his hand upon his heart, said, "Command me," and again Mrs. Bridleton looked, and nearly smiled.

"I am afraid, madam, we keep you up?" said Valentine. "We would not break your repose; no, not for the hopes of the Chevalier."

"There isn't a spare bed," remarked Mrs. Bridleton.

"Bed, madam!" said Piebald. "Talk not of bed—we can all sleep in this," and he affectionately patted his hand against the newly filled flagon as he raised it to his lips. "This, madam, shall be down, blankets, and damask to us."

"Good-night, madam;" said Mandril, albeit Mrs. Bridleton made no motion to depart. "Good-night," he repeated, in melting tones.

"And for the shop and the good-will, though poor Jeremy's head should look over Temple Bar, we'll make all right—depend upon us."

Thus spoke Sampson; at the same time using such encouraging gestures for the absence of the matron, that the good soul, confounded, perplexed, terrified by the character of her visitors—by the dangerous position into which the reckless politics of Jeremy had betrayed him—after a vain attempt to elicit further explanation of the future views of the party, submitted to their polite violence, and retired from the room.

"Are they really Thistles, or are they——" and then Mrs. Bridleton paused in her uncharitable thoughts, as she ascended to her chamber. "No; 'tis plain Jeremy gave them the key—hang the Chevalier!"

Having passed this sentence upon the illustrious adventurer Mrs. Bridleton sought her bed.

CHAPTER VI.

Our readers will be sufficiently informed of the peculiar manner in which the party in the parlour passed the three following hours, when we remind them that Sampson Piebald was possessed of the key of the cellar, and that his worthy co-mate, Robert Mandril, was fully acquainted with the position of the ale-barrel. It was half-past four by Bishopsgate chimes when Piebald and Mandril, seethed in potent floods of malt and hops, snored forth their happiness. Valentine sat gazing on the dying embers, and wrapped in profound thought, when a light tapping at the door, two or three times repeated, startled him

from his musing. He opened the door, and beheld the pale face and swimming eyes of Peggy Mavis.

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Valentine, "what has happened?"

"Where are your friends?" asked the girl in low, anxious tones. Valentine pointed to his sleeping companions in either chimney corner.

"That is well: hush! follow me," said Peggy, and with the tread of a fairy she glided from the parlour to an adjoining room. Valentine gazed with astonishment and admiration at the altered features of the maiden.

Margaret Mavis had one of those happy, gentle faces, which seen in ordinary times, betoken an incapability of high expression; which seem made and moulded by calm thoughts, tranquil desires; things of peace, a part of the world in its visionary age of golden innocence. The face of Peggy Mavis had been pronounced by a city painter of her days, insipid. The beauty was too regular—the eye too quiet. Very different had Guido Blot judged of the maiden had he seen her, as, placing the candle (considering that we write a romance, we ought, perhaps, to say taper)—upon the table, she held forth her pretty hand—a hand worthy to give away her heart—towards Valentine. Her face was pale as that of the holiest of nuns, her bright grey eye made brighter with tears, her soft, pulpy under-lip, a little parted from its fellow, her brown, silken hair flung off her beating temples, waving down her neck—and her bosom panting like a caught dove beneath her bodice. Thus she stood, and looked at Valentine.

"What has happened?" again he asked.

"I know all—my aunt has told me all. She is now asleep," replied Peggy, trembling with fear.

"All!" echoed Valentine, and he scarcely suppressed a smile.

"They will kill you—they will murder you," cried Margaret, and, bursting into tears, she sank upon a chair.

"Kind, gentle girl—I could beat the fool whose idle story has thus disturbed you. And yet, I know not—perhaps I ought to thank him for it."

"No, sir; no—'tis not an idle tale; my aunt has told me all—they will kill you," and the girl sobbed vehemently.

"Your aunt has told you of some danger that threatens your guardian—of a plot in which myself and friends have joined him? Is it not so?" asked Valentine laughingly.

"All—all," replied the maiden. "But do not laugh, sir—you will break my—no, I"—— and the girl hid her crimsoned face in her hands, and trembled from head to foot.

"Is my fate—the fate of a stranger—so very dear to you?" asked the young man.

"Stranger!" cried the girl, and something of reproach gleamed in her eye.

"I am well corrected: never more let me offend with that word," said Valentine.

"I owe you my life, sir," said Margaret—"more than my life; for I might have lived a maimed, a wretched, crippled thing. I have seen you, thanked you too often for your goodness, to think you now a stranger."

"Seen me, young lady! Where?" asked Valentine.

"Do not ask me—do not ask me," cried Margaret: "where should we see?"—she cried with new animation—"where should we thank those who have preserved us?—in our prayers."

"Beautiful girl! your sensibility, your goodness overrates an accidental service. It was nothing—never speak of it."

"My aunt is now asleep—what is to be done?" asked Margaret. "I am a poor, ignorant creature; but I know that matters such as she has told me lead to misery and death. I do not know your present means—you must escape, and suddenly—with no time to meet your friends—pray forgive me; do, sir, pardon me—it is but little, but it is all I"—— and, incapable of further words, she turned her streaming eyes from the youth, and with a trembling hand offered him a purse.

A moment Valentine gazed at the maiden, and then passionately caught her in his arms. We could wish to hold the reader some minutes longer in the society of the young couple, but are compelled by circumstances to ask his company up stairs.

A horrid dream, in which was presented a vivid view of Tower Hill on an execution day, haunted the troubled slumbers of Mrs. Bridleton:—she saw Jeremy brought out to suffer, and, as the axe fell upon Dunbrown, she awoke with a scream. She called upon Peggy, and Peggy answered not. Mrs. Bridleton immediately arose, and with but little previous preparation took her way to the chamber-door of Jeremy. There she stood, and knocked, and whispered, and knocked, and called. At length she heard Dunbrown stir—he turned heavily in his bed: she took courage from the happy incident, and knocked and called again. Dunbrown grunted, growled, but still seemed in hopeless insensibility. Again Mrs. Bridleton knocked and bawled, and was again reduced to utter despair, when, to her exceeding delight, Jeremy muttered, "Who the devil's that?"

"Open the door," said Mrs. Bridleton—"open the door!"

"Ha! ha!" and Jeremy, half-asleep, snorted a laugh. "Ha! ha!—infernal thief—stolen keyhole."

"Open the door, I say!—there'll be murder!" cried Mrs. Bridleton.

"Go to bed!" answered the imperturbable Dunbrown.

"And robbery!" added the matron; "you hear—and robbery!"

The word struck to the very core of Dunbrown's heart: he leaped like a young fawn from the bed, but came heavily as a bullock upon the floor.

"Did you say robbery?" he asked, with sudden animation.

"Do you recollect all that happened last night? There's some of the club in the house," said the woman.

"Thistles!" asked Jeremy.

"They brought you home—but that's not the worst. If they are not rebels, they are"——

"Where's the key?" cried Dunbrown, who found himself prisoner. Again he roared, "Where's the key?"

"I possess that useful implement," called out Sampson Piebald, from the bottom of the staircase; for Sampson had been roused from his slumber by the conversation of Valentine and Margaret, and had become thoroughly awakened by the shrill tones of Mrs. Bridleton.

"Who's that?" asked Jeremy, gaspingly.

"Wait a minute," said Mrs. Bridleton, and she unhesitatingly descended the staircase, presented herself before Piebald, and with praiseworthy nerve, holding forth her hand, said, "The key, if you please?"

Sampson Piebald stared at the woman, pursed his lips, and, heavily moving his head, replied, "By no means."

"And why not?" asked Mrs. Bridleton.

"My good woman," said Piebald, "matters, you see, have taken a strange turn. Jeremy Dunbrown is our prisoner."

"Prisoner! for what? What are you?" cried the matron.

"Friends of the House of Hanover, and officers of the Government. Dunbrown thought us traitors—in a few minutes he will be in custody—already we expect the guards, when"——

"Watch! watch! watch!" roared Dunbrown from his window.

"Jeremy calls the watch!" cries Mrs. Bridleton, in consternation.

Sampson Piebald was, for a moment, staggered by the fact; he, however, recovered himself, and, waving his hand, observed, with a sigh, "His blood be upon his own head. There is the key."

"Watch! watch! watch!" reiterated Jeremy.

"We have now, madam," said Piebald, "nothing left us to perform but our stern duty—we might have saved him: we must now render him into the hands of justice."

"Good God!" cried Mrs. Bridleton: "and where's my niece? Where's Peggy?"

"Hush!" said Piebald, confidentially, "she's with the Colonel."

"The Colonel!" cried the aunt.

"That handsome young gentleman disguised in shabby clothes. He"——

But at this moment a rattle was heard to spring—a second rattle took up the sound—a third, a fourth, a fifth joined in concert, and, in two or three minutes, the whole line of Bishopsgate was vocal with the music of the venerable watch, the lungs of Jeremy Dunbrown roaring above the clamour. Poor Mrs. Bridleton turned white as the candle shaking in her hand. And now the watchmen besiege the door, beating it with their cudgels, and shouting the while.

Piebald maintained a most heroical self-composure. He looked mournfully at Mrs. Bridleton: "My heart bleeds to give him up," he said; "but when Dunbrown's drawn and quartered, don't blame me." With this Piebald stalked to the street-door, unbolted, and opened it. "Gentlemen," he said, as a dozen vigilant Nestors filed into the passage, "gentlemen—a pretty bit of treason!—you are very welcome."

"Treason!" cried the watchmen, and Mrs. Bridleton wept and wrung her hands.

"There is the key," and Sampson took the instrument from the aunt and gave it to Barnaby Argus. "You'll find the rebel"——

"Watch! watch! watch!" cried the captive Dunbrown.

"That's his voice—in the three-pair front," said Sampson—"a pretty reward, no doubt."

At these words the public-spirited old men seemed to fling off their years, and climbed up stairs, leaving Piebald and his companions to themselves.

"What's the matter?" asked Bob Mandril, trying to open his eyes, so fast had they been sealed by Dunbrown's ale.

"Matter! you fool!—now's the time. Val's off—this way!" And Piebald, having "supped full" of eggs and bacon, felt he had no further claim upon the sympathies of the brazier. "This way!" and the two friends crossed the threshold, and to their disappointment, found themselves collared by a couple of watchmen, a portion of a reinforcement brought to the door of Dunbrown.

"These be the thieves!" cried one of the watch.

"Phwegh!" and a second held his lantern to the face of Piebald: "he was *'dited* for horse-stealing last sessions. Where be Master Dunbrown?"

CHAPTER VII.

Great was the stir throughout Bishopsgate before the next noon. Jeremy Dunbrown, the brazier, who had been sometime suspected of indulging in Jacobinical preferences, was at length discovered in his treasons. He stood forth in the eyes of the world a full-blown rebel! Already gossips talked of his certain execution. We will not answer for the many thousand stand of arms with which he had supplied the Chevalier—the number of letters written with the Prince's own hand to the attainted traitor.

At twelve o'clock Jeremy Dunbrown, together with Piebald, Valentine—for he had not quitted the house as was believed by his companions—and Mandril, stood in the awful presence of Alderman Greenfat, chief functionary of the ward.

"This—hem! hem!—silence there—this is a serious business," said Alderman Greenfat, and he looked at Jeremy.

"Particularly serious," said Pettichaps, the alderman's clerk, who also looked at Dunbrown.

"Hanging work, I'm afraid, for somebody," said Jeremy, glancing at Piebald and his friends.

"Never mind. Though rogues abound," said the Alderman, "there's rope enough." At which stroke of wit there was great laughter—laughter in which Mr. Pettichaps, the clerk, joined.

"Now, what's your name?" asked the Alderman of Sampson.

"Sampson Piebald," was the immediate answer of the bearer of that name.

"Piebald? Humph! ha! Well, Mr. Piebald," said Alderman Greenfat, preparing himself for another hit; "I can only hope that this mayn't altogether prove a black business." This second touch was more successful than the first; great laughter succeeded, in which, as before, Mr. Pettichaps joined.

"Well, Mr. Piebald, how do you get your living?" was the home-question of the Alderman.

"May it please your worship, I—I"——

"Ha! very well: I perceive the question is difficult to be answered—he! he!" cried the Alderman, laughing; and Mr. Pettichaps, as in duty bound, shewing his teeth. "Now, fellow, mind what you're about. Mr. Dunbrown is a most respectable person; therefore, be you particularly careful. You charge him with treason, eh?"

"Not for the world, your worship," said Piebald.

"He did, your worship," cried Mrs. Bridleton; "he did—he did!" and Barnaby Argus, with others of his vigilant fraternity, declared themselves prepared to take a most solemn oath to the fact.

"You were found in Mr. Dunbrown's house," said the Alderman, sternly, to Piebald.

"I gratefully acknowledge his hospitality," answered Sampson, who thereupon requested to be heard in explanation. He and his friends had been almost forcibly carried away by Jeremy Dunbrown, at one o'clock that morning, as the brazier was met staggering to his home. Piebald and his companions, sympathising with the helplessness of Dunbrown, attended him to his door, Jeremy all the while discoursing of the Chevalier, of bacon and eggs. Arrived at Jeremy's house, they had, with the greatest tenderness, put him to bed—the gentlewoman present must allow the fact—and had then, pressed by the benevolence of that worthy matron, partaken of a most savoury supper. "And I must say it," observed Sampson Piebald, in conclusion, "say it here in open court—better eggs and better bacon, floated down by better ale, cannot delight the throat of man."

"But, fellow, you spoke of treason to the watchmen," said the Alderman.

"I deeply regret, your worship," answered Piebald, staring at the guardians of Bishopsgate, "that liars are sometimes found in highest offices."

"He said something about treason," said one watchman.

"And about a warming-pan," said Mrs. Bridleton.

"Pooh! pooh! pooh!" cried Alderman Greenfat. "What is the charge? You called out thieves, Mr. Dunbrown. Was nothing stolen?"

"I picked up this purse," said a watchman; "no doubt, your worship, dropped by one of the thieves."

"Oh, ho! now we come to something," said the Alderman; "who makes the charge—who owns the property?"

"The purse is mine," said Margaret, blushing, and advancing towards the bench.

"And could the villains rob you, child, eh?" asked Greenfat, melted by the beauty of the timid maiden.

"I let it fall in—in the confusion," answered Peggy.

"What! and is there no charge to be made?" shouted Alderman Greenfat; "infamous!"

"Shameful!" said Mr. Petticbaps, the clerk.

"No charge?" again asked the Alderman; and, after a moment's pause, bellowed, "Clear the court!" and the court was cleared.

Jeremy Dunbrown returned to his home in gloom and silence. His frailty of the past night was become the talk of the ward. More; he had stood before the judgment-seat, and knew not what after-tale of treason might come out against him—what disaffection spoken in his bacchanal hours might doom him to a gaol. It was in vain that he sought to remember every topic broached at the club—it was more than enough for him to know that the principles of many of its members had, like his own, a Jacobinical taint. Could he—as Mrs. Bridleton, on the authority of Piebald, assured him—could he have been so drunk as to vaunt an appointment as brazier to the Pretender? Impossible; and yet, Tubal Pots, a fellow-workman, was present, and he might have made the boast to twit him. He, however, would separate from the club—he would immediately give up politics, take Peggy Mavis for wife, and live a sober man. Such was the determination of Jeremy Dunbrown at three o'clock on the day of his examination; and, at five minutes after that hour, Piebald and Mandril, each with a large bridal favour in his hat, entered the shop of the brazier.

"Mr. Jeremy Dunbrown," said Sampson, "we attend here for a double purpose: first, sir, to congratulate you on your lucky escape from drawing and quartering; a piece of luck, sir, on which, did I choose to brag, I might say more."

"Leave my shop, fellow!" said Jeremy, waxing wrathful.

Piebald, however, was a philosopher; and therefore, smiling at the brazier, continued—"Secondly, sir, we have to congratulate you upon a most valuable addition to your family.

"What!" exclaimed Jeremy.

"Mr. Dunbrown!" cried Mrs. Bridleton, brought to the shop by the voice of the visitor.

"A fine lad, sir—a remarkably fine fellow," said Mandril.

"What do you mean?" asked Dunbrown.

"A lad of courage, sir, as you shall hear Patience, sir, I'll tell the story—I have just heard it—'tis but a short one. Miss Margaret Mavis"——

"Dear me! where is Peggy?" cried Dunbrown.

"Patience—patience, and listen," and Piebald held the brazier by the coat. "Last Lord Mayor's-day Margaret Mavis went to see the show"——

"And what of that?" asked Mrs. Bridleton.

"That lovely maiden," continued Piebald, "with perfect confidence in the stability of the timber, had taken her place, with many of her friends, upon a most convenient scaffold, the accommodation charge whereof was one shilling. 'Twas in Ludgate, sir."

"To be sure—it broke down," cried Mrs. Bridleton.

"It did break down, ma'am," answered Piebald; "and even now I feel my marrow grow cold to think what might have been the fate of the excelling maiden, had not a gallant youth, amidst falling beams and crashing timbers, snatched the beautiful Peggy from the shrieking crowd."

"Well, I know all this—all but the young man; who was he?" asked Dunbrown.

"Strange as it may appear, he never again, until this very morn, beheld the maid. Judge his delight—having, with my friend here and myself, seen you put to bed—to meet in that parlour, yes, in that very parlour—the creature of his love!"

"Love!" cried Jeremy.

"Love!" cried Mrs. Bridleton. "That vagabond love Margaret!"

"Vagabond!" answered Piebald. "Ha! ma'am, you should only hear how he praised your bacon."

"And where is he—where's the girl?" asked Dunbrown. "What's become of 'em? Speak!"

"Look here, sir," and Piebald showed his wedding-favour: "there is not, sir, in your well-ordered shop, saucepan, pot, or pan riveted faster than they are."

"Married!" shouted Dunbrown. "O Lord!"

"Married, sir; and the new couple ask your company in your own parlour here, until they shall be ready to give their house-warming."

We will not dwell upon the violence of Dunbrown—the horror of Mrs. Bridleton at the forwardness of her niece. After an hour or so, Jeremy relented, and accepted the happy pair at his fireside.

"Come, Master Dunbrown," cried Piebald, at about eleven at night, Jeremy having again slipped in liquor; "come, drink to the health of the bridegroom. He's a rare fellow!"

"Infernal thief!" growled Jeremy, more than half asleep.

"Glorious boy!" said Piebald.

"Stole key-hole," muttered Dunbrown.

Valentine, who was the orphan son of a ruined merchant, was enabled by his wife's fortune to enter upon profitable commerce; and, by his counsel and assistance, reclaimed and served his wild, yet well-meaning companions, Piebald and Mandril. Valentine himself became Lord Mayor; and, on the day of his show, was observed to gaze with singular complacency at a certain spot in Ludgate. Piebald died a vintner and an alderman; and had Mandril lived but five years longer, it was confidently believed he would have been of the Common Council.

MR. PEPPERCORN "AT HOME."

CHAPTER I.

A GRAVE call from a Court of Law summoned Isaac Peppercorn, Esq., from the romantic wilds of Lincolnshire to the peopled desert of London. It was with a pang and a foreboding of future mishap, that Isaac, having thrice read the mandate of his attorney, resigned himself to his fate. But there was no help for it; he must, for a time, quit the rural deities to "attend to his interest." He sighed to leave his home, a circumstance to be marvelled at by those who looked upon it. To be sure, every hovel has its household gods, though we incline to think that Providence Hall—such was the name of Peppercorn's mansion—lacked them in winter. In the last frost a cat had been found frozen to death at the fireside; a loss of little matter to the dwellers, inasmuch as no mouse had ever been seen or heard within the tenement. The Hall was a huge, shapeless pile, pierced with here and there a window—indeed, it was a whitewashed barn, with casements. Time and tempest had done their work, and the very penetralia of the building were now open to sun and rain. Isaac, seated at his hearth-stone, sat calmly as a Cornelius Agrippa, with the elements playing about him. We may liken Providence Hall in its dilapidations to a huge Æolian harp; and in winter nights, terrible was the music of the tempest. And yet Isaac Peppercorn and old Biddy, his no less tranquil housekeeper, would sleep as sweetly through the hurricane, as did the lost babes in the wood, albeit, we hasten to observe, not in the same proximity. Biddy, however, had a clear conscience; though, poor soul, she was miraculously deaf. Isaac, too, had a conscience—but custom made him slumber. Indeed, so essential was a storm to his peace, that the nights the Hall ceased to rock—fortunately they were few—his rest was sure to be broken.

Several of the casements had been blown in, but Isaac had never reproached the elements by having them replaced. Not a chimney lifted its arrogant head above the roof, having been levelled thereto by the tempest. That the Hall held together through a high wind, that roof and sides did not come down like a house of cards, was a wonderful illustration of what is commonly called a lucky escape. However, Palmyra had its date; and, the spring in which Isaac was summoned from the Hall, it was remarked that the swallows had deserted the eaves, the feathery grass waved at the door-step, pieces of green moss, like patches on the face of an ancient beauty, grew on the walls, making ruin more visible; and all things gave token of speedy dissolution.

It was seven o'clock on a March morning as the door of the Hall creaked on its one hinge, and Isaac Peppercorn, followed by Biddy the housekeeper, and Cupid the terrier, came forth into the light. Isaac was equipped for travel. He carried—we cannot say wore—a coat of forgotten black; made for him in the days of his belly, he having many years since subdued that deformity. The coat met in one wide wrinkle down the back; pocket yearned to pocket; and the large cuffs hung like horse-collars on the wrists of the bearer; who had ventured himself into breeches coeval with the coat, and had armed his legs with boots—evidently made, but found too big, for some giant—as hard as horn. A broad-brimmed hat, tied over his ears with a red handkerchief, secured the beaver from the sudden prancings and caracolings of the horse, should the animal indulge therein. Alas! much was the gravity of that ancient quadruped scandalised by the precaution. Little of Isaac's face was to be seen, but that little looked very like a withered apple. He carried a whip with a handle a yard-and-a-half long, and a thong thereto—fortunately the horse was blind—enough to appal the heart of a Bucephalus. Isaac said a few words in a voice between a cough and a whistle to Biddy, who crossed her thin arms over her apron, widened her mouth into a smile, and said nothing. The horse, held by a boy, was at the gate: it was of a dirty white, and looked rather the spectre of a horse, than a living steed. What hair it had was as rough as a rug, but its tail—and in the ignorant vanity of its heart the horse continually twitched it to catch the eye of the spectator—was bare as a carrot. The animal continued to champ the bit, with a satisfaction that at last it had got something in its mouth. Isaac, with inhuman placidity, mounted the horse, touched the rein, rattled his legs in his boots, plied his whip, and in a minute or two the horse gathered itself up and shambled off—much to the apparent

annoyance of a party left at the Hall; we mean, Cupid the terrier. Now, the dog was as lean, nay even leaner than the horse, but there was a something in its spirit—it must have been hope—that as it sometimes looked at the white horse on the common, made it cheerful, nay, even gamesome. This morning, however, it was but too plain that all was not right with Cupid. As the horse stood saddled, waiting for the rider, Cupid as on tip-toe walked round it, now looking in its face, and now at its ribs, and now gazing mournfully at its master. When, however, Peppercorn was fairly mounted, and the steed, after due consideration, stumbled into a trot, Cupid tried to bark, but its voice failed, and it only wheezed at the departing horse-flesh; and yet, as plainly as legacy-hunter ever mourned his disappointment, did Cupid exclaim—"There go my long nourished hopes of many, many dinners!" The neighbours had long marked the attention of the dog to the horse—had often dwelt upon the friendship of Cupid: friendship! in this world how hard is it to discover the motives of even a dog.

Nothing calls upon us to pause on the road from Providence Hall to London. Isaac Peppercorn, though slowly, was safely borne to the metropolis by his faithful steed: its master—in his simplicity he thought as much—dismounting for the night at a humble, economical inn, in the northern suburbs. It was nine in the morning, and Isaac sat in the travellers' room, fixed, like the lady in Comus, in his chair, glancing at a strip of, evidently, significant paper. At length he exclaimed in a voice which startled the tripping waiter into a dead halt—

"It can't be—no, no—it can't be!"

"What's the matter, sir?" asked the anxious servant, taking breath.

"Bed—bed—a shilling!" cried Peppercorn, as though he was proclaiming the whole sum of human iniquity.

The waiter tucked his napkin under his arm, rubbed his hands, and observed, "One shilling."

"And I—I slept soundly all night!" exclaimed Peppercorn, in almost an agony of self-reproach.

"Glad to hear it, sir," said the waiter, with a bland smile.

Peppercorn cast a cannibal look at the speaker, then fixed his eye on the bill, and repeated, "A shilling!"

"I believe, sir," said the waiter, perfectly aware of the fact, "I believe, sir, you took no supper?"

Peppercorn swung round in his seat, put his hands upon his knees, and, with a grim grin at his tormentor, asked, "Do you think I'm from the Diamond Mines or the Gold Coast? Supper! and bed a shilling!" Again, he ventured to glance at the bill,

and again he screamed, until his voice broke, "Breakfast! what! breakfast—ninepence!"

"Ninepence," calmly corroborated the waiter.

Peppercorn spoke in a tone of touching appeal, "A cup of milk and a chip of toast!"

"You call it breakfast, sir," remarked the immoveable servant —"so do we. You might have had coffee and eggs for the same money."

"Oh!" cried the guest, with the air of a man who has his adversary at a dead thrust—"Oh! then it seems you charge according to the clock: and if a man was to have only eggs at dinner-time, I suppose he'd have to pay for full-grown turkeys."

The waiter could not escape from this reasoning; he therefore bowed, rubbed his hands, and observed, "The rule, sir, at every respectable inn."

"Do you call this place an inn?" asked Peppercorn, with his eyes fixed on the bill. "A melting-pot," he muttered—"yes, a crucible! Was a man ever known to take a whole guinea out of it? Oh, yes—no doubt—the landlords. Eh! what's this? Oats!"

"Oats," echoed the waiter. "You came on horseback."

"Thank you for the news, sir. I've come a hundred miles on horseback, but, I bless my stars, this is only the third time I have incurred a charge for oats. 'Oats fourpence!' And after such a harvest! Providence," said Peppercorn solemnly, "is lost upon these people!"

"I believe, sir," ventured the waiter, "you wouldn't have your boots"—they were sheathed in mud—"you wouldn't have your boots cleaned?"

"I never was a fop in my young days," said Peppercorn, proudly looking down on his dirty leather; "and I hope I am too old for such vanities now. Humph! Two shillings and a penny," said the traveller, pronouncing the sum total.

"And then, sir," insinuated the waiter, "there is myself, sir—and Sukey chambermaid, sir,—and"——

"If I have given you any trouble," replied Peppercorn, with grave politeness, "I am sorry for it. As for the chambermaid, I always prefer making my bed myself. I'm an old traveller, though I may not have travelled much for some years; and it was always my maxim to consider the chambermaid included in the bed. Yes—two shillings and a penny," repeated the imperturbable Peppercorn, as the ostler, with serious meaning in his eyes, presented himself before the traveller.

"That horse of yours, sir," said the ostler, mysteriously, "must have been fond on you, to bring you all the way to London."

"To be sure he is—but why, why, my man, do you think so?" asked Peppercorn.

"Why, sir—because by rights, he ought to have died three days ago. Poor thing! But it's no use to grieve, sir,"—and the ostler looked the picture of resignation—"it's no use to grieve, sir; dogs must be fed."

"Dogs! Anything happened to my horse?"

"Dead, sir," briefly replied the ostler.

The camel that carries the Koran to Mecca is thenceforth exempt from future labour; the horse that brought Peppercorn to London was freed from further toil! Its journey done, it died.

"Dead! Well, he *was* weak," observed Peppercorn, mastering his grief—"he *was* weak, but what could he die of?"

"On life and death, sir," replied the man of the stables, "it's always hard to give a judgment; but it's my opinion, sir, that he died of the smell of the hay. Ha, John!" and the fellow threw a significant glance at the waiter—"you should have seen him shy at the rack."

"Did you give him a feed?" asked Peppercorn, anxiously.

"I tried—I tried," answered the benevolent ostler; "but la! sir, he didn't seem to know what oats was made for."

"Then he didn't eat?" continued Peppercorn, with growing concern.

"Eat!" said the ostler, with emotion—"he looked at the corn for all the world as a christian looks at a bad shilling."

Again Peppercorn cast his eye upon the bill. "'Oats fourpence.' Take four from two-and-a-penny, and there will remain one-and-ninepence. There—there," and Peppercorn forced the amount into the hand of the waiter—"there, my friend, is your lawful demand, without the chambermaid, the ostler, the waiter, or the oats. I see you are about to be moved—I see you are. Now, understand me: I give you unbounded permission to call me whatever you like—to think me whatever you please—but," and Peppercorn buttoned his pocket in a manner that shut out all hope—"I do not give one penny more." And with this determination, our traveller quitted the inn, enduring like a martyr the fiery glances of the servants. Peppercorn, we must add, was touched by the death of his horse; for, impressed on his long ride with the growing unfitness of the animal for the saddle, he had resolved to put it in the way of harness. He wished to leave the creature in London, promoted to a hackney-coach, when, alas! he saw it on a tumbril. However, the reader may be assured that the remains of the quadruped were not left neglected in the stable by their late master; no, all that

could be done for them, Isaac Peppercorn most scrupulously performed.

It was yet the morning when Isaac entered Clement's Inn, on his way to the chambers of Mr. Sheepskin, his legal adviser—his pilot among the quicksands, reefs, and shoals of our inestimable laws. Sheepskin was an unerring guide—a person of most curious knowledge. Under his tuition, a man might trade securely all his life near the gallows, when, if left to his own discretion, he had surely mounted the ladder. Sheepskin could take a client near enough to smell the odour of the hemp, and yet secure his neck from the halter. Yes; Jonathan Sheepskin was a learned—a great man.

"Mr. Peppercorn"—he exclaimed, in a cordial voice, as Isaac walked into the office—"Mr. Peppercorn! delighted—delighted to see you! Have done nothing but expect you these three days. No mishap on the road, I hope?"

"A lame horse, Master Sheepskin; but he's cured. Now, now," cried Peppercorn, querulously, "why am I hauled up to London—to this land of profligacy and waste? Do you think me Crœsus, or Midas, or the fellow with the wonderful purse? Must I die in a poor-house?" his frequent question when incurring or tempted with any expense.

Sheepskin bore the complaint with more than professional meekness, and smiling, said very softly—"My dear sir, you must watch your interests." The chord was struck, and Peppercorn's face relaxed.

"Interests! Well, well—what of my affairs, Sheepskin?"

The lawyer drew himself up, and said, "I am proud to say they flourish. Ha! Mr. Peppercorn—there's a blessing upon your money, sir, it increases like fish. Your wealth"——

"Pah! wealth!"—Peppercorn could not endure to be reminded of his riches, which he always declared to be nought—"wealth—what is wealth, if I had it, against fate? I shall die —I know it—I shall die poor as a worm. I am sure of it—a pauper—a—but all goes well, you say?"

The attorney smiled assent to every question, as his client ran through the long catalogue of his ventures. "And—and the Hyacinth estate—what of that?"

Sheepskin was suddenly grave at the question, and raising his eyebrows, and taking his right knee between his clasped hands, he remarked, "Why, the Hyacinth estate—ha! there we have not been lucky."

"No—no—no," cried Peppercorn, in a tone of something like remorse; "who could hope it? What had I to do with it? My sister's houses, and you made me take them. Well, how

many have tenants?" Sheepskin shook his head. "What! none?" exclaimed the landlord, and "none," looked the attorney. Peppercorn groaned. "So, grass at every threshold—grass at every threshold! And the boy? But doubtless Tyburn has ended him."

"If so, we had surely heard of the accident," remarked Sheepskin, with his usual acuteness.

"Not so," replied Peppercorn, generously championing the spirit of his nephew—"not so, Mr. Sheepskin; for, with all his faults, I think the rogue has family pride enough to be hanged under a false name." And then, his thoughts recurring to his empty houses—"Not a tenant—not one! And I am put to charge for travel—ruin! ruin!"

"Your stay in London, for the business we have to do, may not exceed a month," said the lawyer.

"A month!" shouted Peppercorn. "And how am I to live? Where am I to hide my head? A month—and in London?"—and a vision of the coming poorhouse floated before the eyes of the miser.

"That we'll consider," said Sheepskin, who hospitably added, "you shall be my guest—to-day."

"And where to sleep?" and Peppercorn unconsciously muttered, "bed a shilling!"

"My clerk shall find you a lodging. Here, Thomas"——

"Hush!" cried Isaac. "I can't creep into a rabbit-burrow or perch upon a bough, and all other lodging is chargeable. Where shall—why, what a wasteful wretch am I! Here have I paid for lodging, and I have twenty houses, with not a soul in one of 'em. Yes, yes," and Peppercorn smiled from ear to ear—"as there is nobody on the Hyacinth estate, I'll—yes, while I stay in London, I'll be tenant there myself."*

"What! at this season, Mr. Peppercorn? My dear sir, consider the cold," said Sheepskin.

"I am not rich enough, Mr. Sheepskin, to know what cold is," said Peppercorn.

"But every house has been empty so long," urged the lawyer.

"It's time a tenant should be found at last," argued the landlord, confirmed in his design. "Who knows? I may serve as a decoy-duck, and bring others. Don't speak, Sheepskin; I am fixed—it must be—for no wealth can stand the costs I've suffered. Not a word; in one of my empty houses I sleep to-night. You can supply me with furniture, Sheepskin?"

* This was the custom of John Elwes, who, in the practice, doubtless imitated Isaac Peppercorn.

"Why, really, Mr. Peppercorn"——

"With all the furniture necessary for civilised man? Listen: let me have a mattress stuffed with anything; two blankets—sheets are effeminate; one stool and a tinder-box; no man really needs more—all beyond is wasteful superfluity," said Peppercorn.

"But, my dear sir, you'd never sleep alone in a house?"

"I have the sweetest bedfellow," said Peppercorn, to the utter astonishment of his lawyer—"conscience, Sheepskin,—conscience. Ha! it's a charming thing to feel her at our heart—to hear her even-song and morning-song; and—yes—more than all, it is charming to feel that we can enjoy the sweets of bed, while, at the same time, we save our shilling."

Peppercorn was resolute in his purpose: the landlord became his own tenant.

CHAPTER II.

It was near that part of Bloomsbury, known at the time of our history as the Long Fields, that the uninhabited tenements owned by Peppercorn were situated. They formed a long, dismal line of blackened brick. Each house, viewed by itself, with its uncurtained, cheerless windows, looked grim and desolate—an eyeless skull. Spiders wove their webs in the doorway, and the sparrows chirped from the smokeless chimney. There seemed the curse of crime or law on the buildings: surely, some murder had been done there,—or, perhaps, the mortar was crumbling from the bricks, and the rot was growing in the rafters, whilst Justice weighed in her separate scales the claims of litigants to the wasting ruin. Such must have been the thoughts of many a stranger, startled by the cold and dreary aspect of the houses. There was nothing picturesque in their desolation,—the passenger hurried by them, chilled with a feeling of discomfort. And yet at one of these houses, and one of the most wretched, at the time their landlord was dining with his attorney, a young man was knocking loudly for admission. Many and many a day had passed since such a sound had rung through the walls. Still the young man knocked, and at intervals looked upwards, as though to catch the face of an inhabitant at a window. The door remained fast—not a soul was visible. The young man, with an air of impatience, quitted the door, and crossing some paces from the house, again looked for a tenant. He looked in vain—still,

resolved on his purpose, he again addressed himself to the knocker. At length, wearied out, he turned from the door and observed, a few yards from him, a man, whose watchful yet composed air showed him to have been some time a spectator. The appearance of the looker-on contrasted strongly with that of the youth, in whose deportment and manner were the indications of a gentleman, though owing little to his dress for any courtesy that might befal him. The spy—if we may be allowed to call him so—was oddly, nay, fantastically habited; his dress being made up of several pieces of faded finery, each bearing a distant date to the other. In his person, the various fashions of the last hundred years met, and were reconciled. For the wearer, he had a face that seemed as if it would be equally at ease in brocade or in sackcloth; a man either above or below the shafts of fortune.

"Pray, sir," said the young gentleman, and we may at once inform the reader that it was young Hyacinth, Peppercorn's nephew, who addressed himself to the man of odd garments; "pray, sir, can you inform me who dwells in that house?"

"Have you knocked, sir?" asked the fellow in answer, half closing his eye, as if to see through his querist.

"Knocked! I have thundered," replied Hyacinth.

"What then—you," and the fellow lowered his voice to a confidential whisper, and familiarly took Hyacinth by the sleeve —"you have seen *it*."

"*It!*" exclaimed Hyacinth—"*It!* I caught, as I believe, at one of the windows, the features of a gentleman, who"——

"A gentleman? a soldier? Ha! sometimes it does appear in regimentals. But I never heard of its showing itself so early. Ha, sir! we ought to mind what we do while we crawl upon the earth—it must be terrible not to rest well when we're under it."

"My good man, I speak of the person who, I presume, dwells in that house."

"Dwells!" and the man thrust his hands into his pockets, and uttered a long whistle—"walks, you mean. *That* house! all the houses: sometimes it appears at one window, sometimes at another."

"Do you speak of some supposed apparition, or"——

"Supposed! Real spirits, I assure you. Why, look at the houses, don't they seem like so many coffins?"

"And are they all uninhabited?" asked Hyacinth.

"Who do you think would live in 'em? There was old Guilders, the Dutch money-lender—seven years ago he went to live there,"—and the man pointed out a house—"well, he was

left alone one night, and next morning he was found with his neck twisted on the stairs, and what's more, his pockets turned inside out. A shocking sight, I can tell you."

"Then the tenements are said to be haunted?" and Hyacinth laughed.

"*Said* to be haunted! Why there's a ghost on every floor. Then, there was old Mugs, that hanged his son-in-law for forging on him—he lived in that house. And there he walks through the rooms all night, and does nothing but write his name in blue fire on the wainscots."

"Indeed? I am somewhat disposed to become a tenant, for all these awful stories. Now, that house strikes my fancy—yes," and Hyacinth, to the astonishment of his hearer, pointed to the most desolate and ruinous of them;—"that house takes my fancy above all the others."

"Ha! I see," and the man, with somewhat of an anxious look, sidled towards Hyacinth; "I see you are fond of cymbals."

"Cymbals!" cried Hyacinth.

"Well, if all's true, you'll have enough of 'em in that house. You see, when it was last let, the black cymbal-player of the Duke's Guards, used to court the housemaid. Would you think it? She jilted him for the drummer of the same band. The black couldn't swallow this, so he took arsenic. Well, every night —most respectable people, even two churchwardens, have heard him—the black wanders from the kitchen to the housemaid's garret; and all the way up the stairs, from the bottom to the top, he does nothing but play upon his cymbals. Look at the windows, sir; do you see how many are smashed?—that's the music."

"Ha! ha! ha!" and Hyacinth continued to laugh, the man becoming graver at his merriment. "Pray, my good "——

"Young man,"—and the individual who had been as communicative as Doctor Dee on the world of spirits, assumed a very serious tone and air, placing his right arm under the wide skirts of his faded coat, pulling his hat over his brow, and marching up to the very toes of the unbeliever—"young man, I see you have no religion. Good day;" and ere Hyacinth could repel the accusation, the accuser walked rapidly from the spot.

"There is a mystery in this," thought Hyacinth; and again looking up at the house where he had knocked, he muttered, "I could swear it was he." Hyacinth paced irresolutely before the door. Again he looked at the house, and with a mournful smile, sighed—"And *that* house haunted!" Aroused from the reverie into which he had lapsed, he observed a strange man, as he

thought, curiously eyeing him. The appearance of the inquisitor by no means enhanced his attention. He was a thick, burly fellow, with his face literally set in a frame of black hair; his eye, sharpened by cunning, was fastened upon Hyacinth, and his underlip, curled half way down, did not improve the expression of his countenance. When, however, he saw that he was observed, he called up a look of vulgar assurance, and met the approach of Hyacinth with apparent unconcern.

"I think, my friend," said Hyacinth, "like myself, you seem struck with the desolate condition of the dwellings before us?"

"Not a bit of it," growled the stranger; "I'm not a bit struck now,—that's over."

"Over!"

"I was a little timersome at first,—because, you see, I always had to pass down here to see my mother in the next street; but, after a time, I used to say a short prayer, and take a pint of brandy. And then, whatever goblins were about, I didn't care nothing for 'em. But this, you know, can't happen to all of us,— we ar'n't all good Christians." And the speaker twitched his waistband, cocked his hat, and looked fiercely upon Hyacinth.

"True,—very true. Then, ghosts, it seems, abound in these houses?"

"Of course. Why they wer'n't built for nothing but murder and robbery. Ghosts! you should hear 'em screech at night,—'specially when the wind's up."

"And, since the ghosts have dwelt here, has no one been found bold enough to visit them?" asked Hyacinth.

"O, yes! There was a ship's carpenter from Wapping, one of the biggest men you ever looked upon,—you see that room, there,—well, he went to sleep in that house for a wager. He was never seen again."

"Indeed!"

"It's awful, but it's true; all search was made all over the house for him, but there was nothing found but his 'bacco-stopper and his buttons."

"And there was no other evidence of"——

"None at all; only this was remarked: the rats in the house where the carpenter was, were a long time fatter than them in any other. I wouldn't be the owner of them houses for a little: for though I'm a poor man, with only my profession"——

"And what may that be?" courteously inquired Hyacinth.

"Dancing-master," confidently replied the man, to the astonishment of his querist. "'Tis a hard living, sir, but it's an honest one, and meddles with the opinions of nobody. Good

bye, sir, for it's getting duskish, and they'll be jumping the baby in a minute."

"Jumping the baby! What do you mean?" cried Hyacinth.

"Ha!" said the man, shaking his head, with a look of compassion, in Hyacinth's face; "that shows you are a stranger. Why, at that top window, there's a wet-nurse all in white dandling a little baby in *longs*."

"And pray what story may be attached to that apparition?"

"I don't know the partic'lars, but everybody says it's a case of pison, the more especially as the nurse, for one whole month in the year—I think it's this month or the next—does nothing but stir a basin."

"Then what becomes of the baby?" asked Hyacinth, with the smile of a sceptic,—a smile not lost upon the dancing-master, for he gathered himself up, and making a leg—we trust not a sample of his professional grace—replied very coldly, having first passed the cuff of his coat across his lips—"My service to you, sir; I didn't think I was talking to an atheist." Saying which, the dancing-master strided off in huge disgust.

Hyacinth laughed heartily at the religious horror of the self-named professor, but speedily became serious as he reflected on the similarity of intelligence gathered from both his informants. The tales were, of course, inventions of ignorance and superstition. And yet, why, within a few years, should houses, before respectably inhabited, have become the deserted skeletons they were? The house in which he was born—the happy, comfortable home—was now the mere carcass of a dwelling—a large brick shed. Still thoughtful, he lingered near it, when a man, a poor cripple on crutches, toiled by him. Hyacinth raised his hand towards the houses, and was about to speak, when the lame man hurriedly prevented him. "No—no—I can't stop; not here—not here!" cried the beggar, for he was no better, and with his best strength moved himself from a place he seemed to shudder at. Some fascination held Hyacinth to the spot; again and again he looked at the house, and then he paced before it, his eyes upon the earth, and brooding in silence. He was at length startled from this mood by a sudden cry of "Murder!" and, looking round, observed an old man standing with clenched hands, gasping mouth, and starting eyes, at the houses. It was Isaac Peppercorn, transfixed by the spectre of the Hyacinth estate.

"Are you hurt, sir?" cried the nephew, unconscious that he addressed his uncle, to whose assistance he immediately hurried. "Are you hurt?" he repeated.

"Hurt! for life—for life!" cried Peppercorn, wildly.

"Where, sir,—where?" asked Hyacinth. Peppercorn ought in answer to have put his hand to his pocket, but he raised it to the broken casement, at which, according to the dancing-master, the spectre wet-nurse was wont to fondle the spectre baby. "Look there,—look at it!" cried Peppercorn, in anguish at the broken glass; "look at it! isn't it horrible?"

"I—I see nothing," cried Hyacinth, confounded by the emotion of the old man, and, for a moment, shaken in his unbelief.

"Nothing! nothing!" screamed Peppercorn. "Oh! oh! what a spectacle!"

"Is it"—Hyacinth felt almost ashamed to put the question—"is it in white? Is there an infant?"

"O Lord!" groaned Peppercorn, deaf to Hyacinth, and wrapt up in his own injuries,—"there—there—there!" and his eyes wandered all over the broken windows. "Was ever anything like it? What a crash! what a crash!"

Ere Hyacinth could reflect, the ghostly image of the arsenic-taking black presented itself to his mind, and he unconsciously asked of Peppercorn—"Is it cymbals? I hear nothing."

"And such a property, too,—such a property!" exclaimed Peppercorn, insensible to everything but the dilapidations. "Not one house let? Isn't it—isn't it shocking?" cried the landlord. "How many families might be happy there—eh?" And Peppercorn looked wildly at his nephew.

"True, sir, very true," answered Hyacinth. "Yet, sir, when we reflect on the fatal influence of superstition, we cannot feel surprised at the deserted ruin before us."

"Not surprised—not surprised!" cried Peppercorn, resenting the opinion. "Why not, sir,—why not?"

"The stories attached to the houses; indeed, at first, I thought *you* beneath the spell."

"What stories?" exclaimed the landlord, waspishly, and then lowering his voice, and with deference—"what stories?"

"The many horrors committed in the buildings. Every house, if we may believe popular report, seems to have its tale of murder."

"A lie—a lie—a lie!" repeated Peppercorn, with earnest volubility. "I'm strange to London, sir,—what do they say?" And the touched interest of the miser called up his civility. "Tell me, sir, what is it? Murder! where—when?"

Hyacinth, somewhat amused by the odd appearance, and fervent, anxious manner of the landlord, in his turn became a complacent narrator of the terrors he had listened to. The ludicrous gestures of his hearer—the desperate way in which he

plunged his hands into his pockets—the droll ferocity of his countenance—and his frequent, yet unsuccessful, efforts at composure, rendered Hyacinth—despite his good-nature—a more elaborate historian of horror than his original materials gave him warranty. "You spoke of murder, sir,—well, well?" And Peppercorn grinned as at a good jest.

"Yes, sir, only seven years ago the Dutch money-lender at that house—he was found murdered on the staircase."

"And only seven years ago—ha! ha!—serve him right!" Hyacinth started. "What can people expect who don't pay their rent? Seven years ago! No; no Dutchman ever paid a shilling for the premises," said Peppercorn, with authority.

Instantly suspecting that he had found some one acquainted with the concerns of the estate, Hyacinth proceeded with his narrative, bringing out events into bold relief with the license and ability of an historian. "Then, sir, at that house—but you wrong the Dutchman, sir; yes, upon my life, you do; he paid his rent—a year's rent—the receipt was found in his left waistcoat-pocket."

Peppercorn drew himself upon his toes with suppressed rage, and muttered in his throat, "That villain, Sheepskin! Robbed! The receipt was found?—I'm glad of it, for the sake of his poor soul. What a rasc—— Well, that house?"

"Ha! that was very awful; and only three years ago. A beautiful creature, poisoned by a former rival, disguised as a wet-nurse. The innocent babe"——

"Three years ago," interrupted Peppercorn; "was any receipt found there? If not, where's the husband?"

"Oh, sir! that completes the tragedy. He was never heard of more, sir. The last place he was seen at was at the house of—of—I believe the agent to this property. I forget his name"——

"Sheepskin, Clement's-inn?" asked Peppercorn, his eyes turning like lighted glowworms upon Hyacinth.

"Sheepskin was the name," said the nephew, gravely: "where, like an honest man—for it is supposed he immediately after drowned himself—he went to pay his arrears." Peppercorn's arm moved up and down convulsively, and his mouth worked as if filled with dust, but he spoke not. "And in that house, sir," proceeded Hyacinth ——

"That will do—I shall go mad—that will do," roared Peppercorn. Hyacinth, mistaking the cause of the landlord's emotion, forbore to oppress him with the relation of other terrors. However, the fearful curiosity of the miser—his belief that he had been cheated by his agent, many of the houses having been

let—pricked him on to further questions. "Well, sir, that house —was that murder, too?"

"That, sir, is a case of remorse. It was in that house that Mr. Mugs"——

"What! Mugs, of Tower-hill, the ship-dealer—the—he whose nephew was"——

"An unfortunate youth," observed the compassionate Hyacinth.

"A hardened, unfeeling rascal," judged the rigid Peppercorn —"made his own uncle hang him. Did Mugs live there?" asked Peppercorn, as if he had now arrived at the climax of all mortal guilt.

Hyacinth answered, in the same key of solemnity, "Mugs lived there. He is to be seen"——

"Well, there *is* one tenant!" shouted Peppercorn, exulting that he had caught Sheepskin in the fact.

"His ghost is to be seen every night, with a pen filled with blue flame," said Hyacinth.

"Ghost! Pah! Ghost! Ha! ha! You don't believe such lies? You can't believe such bubbles?—no,"—and Peppercorn could sometimes pay a compliment,—"no, you don't look quite such a fool as that."

"I am bound, sir, for your good opinion," returned Hyacinth, gratefully. "I own that reason rejects such fables, and yet we cannot wholly divest ourselves of certain fears and shudderings: in a word, it would try the nerves of the boldest man to pass even a night in one of those houses."

"Do you really think so?" asked Peppercorn, with new gravity.

"Unless"—and Hyacinth enjoyed the sudden seriousness of the sceptic—"unless a man knew Dutch, and could converse with a midnight visitor. To be sure, if he were partial to cymbals, *that* house might be a bargain; or if he were used to ladies in long clothes, *that* might not be objectionable; for the spectres"——

"Do you know, sir, what you are about?" inquired Peppercorn, with austere face. "Do you know that by such reports you seek to ruin the property—the hard-earned property—of an honest man?—and do you know that the landlord may punish"——

"By the way," interrupted Hyacinth, carelessly, "who is now the landlord? Nay, I wish to know."

"Do you want a house?" asked Peppercorn, subduing his face to smiles. "Perhaps about to marry—*that* house, now, for a family"——

"*That* house—you forget the murder that I spoke of," said the nephew.

"I dare say that could be made right," observed Peppercorn.

"Right! Make a murder right?" And Hyacinth stared at the confident look of the speaker.

"To a tenant," said Peppercorn. "For instance, the house went at guineas; if a murder has really been done there, the landlord must say pounds."

"But you have not told me—who *is* the landlord? What kind of man?" asked the nephew.

"A very honest, liberal, excellent kind of man; his name is Peppercorn!" said Peppercorn himself.

"The villain!" exclaimed Hyacinth, in a tempest of rage, to the consternation of its object. "So—they have passed into *his* hands?"

"Do—you—know—the—the—gentleman?" Peppercorn ventured to ask, in a voice reduced to a whisper.

"They were his sister's houses—his younger sister's. Her husband mortgaged them to—and they have fallen—into *his* hands!" And the speaker hid his face, possessed by some strong emotion. Then, recovering himself, he addressed his frightened uncle, "You, sir, I presume, are the landlord's friend, or"——

"His friend;" and Peppercorn drew himself up: "his early, constant, and intimate friend."

Hyacinth raised his arm towards the houses, and looked full in the working, withered face of the owner. "May desolation hang upon their walls—may they become the haunt of wretches as vile and worthless as the wretch who owns them—may they become the miser's curse—his torment—his remorse!" And with his hearty wish, uttered in a tone of thrilling earnestness, the nephew left his ancient uncle.

After some time, Peppercorn came to a sense of his loneliness. He stood, his feet grown to the earth. At length he looked from side to side for his vehement companion, and breathed more freely, finding him gone. He turned towards the houses —his heart sank; but in pulling forth a bunch of keys, each labelled with the number of the dwelling, he pulled out his tavern-bill. In an instant he shrunk from the tales of horror he had listened to; but a glimpse of the tavern document called back his errant spirits. He was beset by ghosts, but he thought of the charge for bed; and, like a wise, worldly man, he triumphed over the assault of superstition by the force of a shilling.

Peppercorn selected his lodging—with much labour turned

the lock—and forced open the unmusical door. As the hinge squeaked, the rats within squeaked in answer, a welcome to a long-absent landlord. Here the passenger—for it was growing dusk—might have fancied, at two or three of the casements, odd, grotesque heads peeping forth, wondering at the aspect of the mysterious visitor. However, Isaac Peppercorn is "at home."

CHAPTER III.

It is the belief of the benevolent that even the devil may be painted in shadow; we have, therefore, some hope of winning the charity of our readers for Sheepskin of Clement's-inn: appearances at first may be against him; but feeling that that adroit person has more than an average share of mistakes to answer for, we hasten to declare that, no matter for the number or the condition of the tenants on the Hyacinth estate, their occupancy was entirely without his consent or knowledge. At the outset of our narrative, we explained the true motives of Cupid, the dog—surely, Sheepskin of Clement's-inn, deserves no less consideration. It is true that the attorney had suffered the houses to fall into decay,—this we cannot deny; but again, for this, he doubtless had his own special reasons. Possibly, in the course of our story, these may be developed. We have now to speak of the immediate neighbours and fellow-lodgers—yes, fellow-lodgers—of Isaac Peppercorn.

The bill of charges presented to our traveller, although seeming monstrous to his simplicity, must at once have struck the reader—for we like to fix the attention through the pocket—as belonging to a happier time than the times we live in. Yes; they were of the golden age, when innkeepers had consciences; every generation of men—it is the comfortable creed of many excellent moralists—improving in wickedness on its predecessor. At what point of degradation the sins of Adam are to stop, remains a curious matter of uncertainty. As a philosopher has given in his firm conviction that man originally emerged from the innocency of an oyster, possibly he is destined to proceed through innumerable changes, until all the human race shall merge into boa-constrictors. Sorry are we to add, that we have known persons, who, although walking erect, and smiling, and looking like the sons of men, did, nevertheless, by certain moral sinuosities, not provided for by the statutes, very

strongly fortify the theory;—men, whose *vox humana* sounded like a hiss, and who, fair and smooth without, had, it was plain, scale armour within. However, in the time of George the Second, there were no such men; or if there were, they were engaged against the Pretender, whose final defeat preceded only a short time the journey of our hero to London. In those days there were vagabonds.

We love vagabonds—we confess it, we have a kindly yearning towards the knavish faculty—the antic cunning—the adroit wisdom, that lives upon the outskirts of life,—and, having altogether shirked what legislators call the social compact,—having from the cradle protested against the impression of a tacit consent to the dull forms of sober men, "clothe the back and fill the maw" from the weakness, the credulity, or the vanity of those who think and dub themselves the grave, wise elders! Your real, quick-blooded, genial vagabond is the arabesque of life,—and much should we lament the doings of that mischievous spirit of utility that with a brush, dripping whitewash, has put it out. Now, all is uniform, and all is blank—even the faded colours of the past do not show through. *Now*, as the French king mournfully said, "we are *all* gentlemen." Seventy, sixty, years ago, there were professed vagabonds—exquisite rascals—with whom Agamemnon might have drunk purl and shared an onion. Again—the painful fact must have found its way to every reflecting man—how miserably have we fallen in the articles of footpads and highwaymen! though it is some consolation that in swindlers we have advanced a little. But only glance at the Old Bailey records of our times. Can anything be more mean, more squalid? There are now no great men on the road: to be sure, science now offers obstructions; it being more difficult to stop a passenger on a railway than on Hounslow. Still, our thieves have much degenerated; whilst, sixty years ago, men made their bow at Tyburn, whom, as Englishmen, we ought ever to be proud of. Turn where we will, we see the evil of respectability—we hate the very word, as Falstaff hated "lime." It has carried its white-wash into every corner of the land—it has made weak and insipid the "wine of life." Look at our players, are they the men they were? In these times, an actor is waited upon by, say two, or three, or four bailiffs: well, for the sake of his respectability, he quietly gets bail, the world losing a lively enjoyment of the circumstance. Now, when Weston or Shuter, we forget which, fell into the hands of the sheriff, the captive, seated in the front row of the gallery, loudly proclaimed his difficulty to the audience, at the same time requesting tender treatment of the catchpoles, they having

permitted him to come to see the play. When shall we hear of L——, or even M——, doing as much? No; there is now nothing picturesque in life. We have caught the wild Indian, deprived him of his beads, his feathers, and his cloak of skins; we have put him into a Quaker's suit without buttons—and behold, the once mighty chief Great Sword is fallen into Mr. Respectable Man! We have now no character at all: it may seem a paradox—but our respectability has destroyed it.

Happily, our story does not belong to these drab-coloured times; and our preface to the present chapter, though long, will not, we trust, in the sequel appear impertinent. We must repeat, Mr. Peppercorn was "at home;" and had his fellow-lodgers and his neighbours, Sheepskin being "innocent of the knowledge." To proceed with our history.

The landlord, with some difficulty, groped his way along the passage; and ascending a few stairs, a dim light through a mud-encrusted window directed him to an apartment on the first floor. He entered the room, and started at the sight of various articles of furniture, not of the most costly kind, but of the first utility. There was a truckle-bed with a blanket or two—a deal table—and the ruins of a chair. "Belonged to the Dutchman, no doubt," thought Peppercorn; and then he rubbed his hands, and showed his stumps of teeth, and crowed aloud—"Ha! ha! Here—here's evidence against Sheepskin—evidence of occupancy. Why, if there ar'n't coals in the grate! ha! ha! This," and the landlord was in a glow of delight, "this is enough to hang him." The darkness increased, when Peppercorn pulled forth his tinder-box—the lawyer was to send the bed and stool—and, taking a rushlight from his pocket, placed it in a bottle, left by lucky chance upon the table. In a minute the taper was lighted, and Peppercorn ere he proceeded to take a view of the house, sat, his hands upon his knees, meditating upon the general iniquity of man, and upon the wickedness of Sheepskin in particular. We know not how long he might have dwelt upon the fertile theme, had not a simple monosyllable from an inhuman voice lifted him up, as though by lighted gunpowder.

"Well!"

The word, it will be allowed, is not much—but it was the time, the tone in which it was uttered, and the person who uttered it, that made it terrible. The word was barked rather than spoken by a miserable wretch in rags, whose face was a striking illustration of the force of love of mothers—nothing less could have saved him from smothering. Peppercorn's under-jaw dropped like a trap-door, as he stared upon the speaker; who, surveying the landlord from head to foot,

continued, " I say, old three corners, I suppose you think yourself at home ? "

" Eh ? Why, yes," said Peppercorn, after a great effort.

"You do, do you ? Well, we shall see about "—here the speaker fixed his eye upon the bottle, made two strides to it, looked at it with the eye of a Dutch water-doctor, then threw a glance of reproach at Peppercorn, and said in a pathetic undertone, prefacing the statement with an oath,—" there was half-a-pint in it when the beak sent me to oakum."

" To oakum," whispered Peppercorn, for surprise had stolen his voice, surprise at the arrival of his visitor, that morning only—we will not disguise the fact—returned from a short retirement in Bridewell.

" Never mind—all's right, you know," said the ragged, dirty, uncombed philosopher ; " all's right, you know," and he slapped Peppercorn violently on the shoulder to convince him, an unbeliever, of the fact. " You'll do what's 'onorable ? "

" I ?" exclaimed Peppercorn, as if quite unaccustomed to any such conduct.

" Ha ! So you've come among us, eh ?" continued the stranger, with growing affability.

" I—I think it was time ; I wish I'd come a long time ago," said the landlord.

" Dare say you do ; capital family, ar'n't we ? How did you find us out ? But I shall know. And what's your *lay ?* Oh, I see ; lord, that I shouldn't have known old Pattison, the letter-writer, at once ! Well, you've dodged 'em a good many years, old fellow, and I 'onor you. But how's all the boys ?" Peppercorn was quite bewildered. " Have you seen the General here o' late ? "

" And does a General live in this house ? " asked Peppercorn.

" This house ! Why, haven't we all the run of the row ? I mean General Pompey : and tell us, how's little Nick, the pieman ; and how goes on the cards of old Dogstar, the conjuror ? And how's Flittermouse, the showman ; and what's become of Muzzleby,—is he here still, and where's the bear ? " And the inquirer, such was his anxiety for his late companions and friends, continued to lengthen the list, summing up with an emphatic—" how are they all ? "

" All in these houses ! " exclaimed Peppercorn, in a tone mistaken by his hearer, for he replied, with fervent satisfaction,—

" All's right as my leg, then, still ! "

" And they—they keep a bear here ? " cried Peppercorn.

" What ! have n't you seen him ? he used to sleep in the next

room;" Peppercorn jumped aside; "but I—I liked to have my private thoughts sometimes; so I got Muzzleby to put him into the drawing-room of number nine. But I say," and the speaker here became serious, "you must be off out of this."

"I must?" and Peppercorn was nearly betrayed into an avowal of his true dignity.

"To be sure you must—honour among thieves, you know. This has been my crib these three years."

"Pray, do you happen to know Mr. Sheepskin, lawyer, of Clement's-inn?" asked the landlord.

"Not the pleasure," said the tenant, and began to whistle, we presume, a thanksgiving.

"He is, as I hear, agent to this estate. In all the time you have inhabited this room—charming room"—and Peppercorn spoke, as with the cholic—"charming room,—has"——

"There's bigger ones; but I like this because of the prospect; there's a steeple I don't know how many miles off; and a steeple's always something to look at," said the vagabond, with an eye to the picturesque.

"Has Mr. Sheepskin ever shown himself among you?"

"An old man like you! arn't you ashamed of yourself to ask such a thing? A lawyer, and come among us! When do you think he'd get out agin?"

"And I have my papers in my pocket," thought Peppercorn, and he turned pale at the recollection. The stranger observed the transition; and, mistaking its cause, put his hand upon the landlord's arm, who shook at the touch, and said, "No, no, don't you be afeard of your company; we wouldn't kill him by no means; no, no, we'd find him in lodging, that's all; 'cause you see, if he or the landlord was to know how many happy families live here for nothing"——

"*I* thought how many might live here half an hour ago," thought Peppercorn to himself, but did not add "for nothing."

"There is no doubt at all, that they'd be hard-hearted enough to send us all packing. No, if we was to catch the lawyer here, we'd give him a cellar for life; perhaps we'd put him along with the bear."

"Not with my bear," said a third party, entering, and the speaker was no less than Muzzleby himself, who, it appeared, was no other than the individual who had, in a preceding scene, advertised himself as a dancing-master to young Hyacinth. "No lawyer with my bear," said he; "I've a love for the animal, and it would't be a fair match." Having said this, the bear-leader welcomed the gentleman from Bridewell, home again: as for Peppercorn, he was considered to have been introduced to the

hospitalities of the estate by the late worker in oakum, and the rapid arrival of persons (by a secret back entrance) into the house prevented any particular inquiry. Peppercorn gasped, and the marrow in his bones turned cold at every new footstep.

"The General will be here," said Muzzleby, "and we shall have such a supper!"

"A supper!" and the late prisoner rubbed his hands, and glared like an ogre.

"A supper!" groaned Peppercorn, and cast his eyes towards the ceiling.

CHAPTER IV.

We have now—passing a few preliminaries—to introduce the reader to a party at supper. We cared not to particularise the persons as they arrived; we preferred to show them at one glance; and there they sit in one of the largest rooms of the best house of the Hyacinth estate, decorously ranged at a table bearing the wherewithal to claim attention of even the fastidious eater. Fortunately for the cook, every man had his working-day appetite about him, and no dish remained unhonoured. From sirloin to black-pudding, every claimant met with due attention. Had the feeders supped in the Ark, they would have thought nothing beneath their notice. However, we are glad that, on the present occasion, the supper was found worthy of the partakers, for how rarely, in these poor respectable days—these miserable times of melancholy and propriety—do we see such character brought together? Talk of cabinet dinners—give us vagabond suppers! Let the reader judge.

We earnestly solicit his attention to the illustrious person with an enormous, partly bald head, at the top of the table. There is one very long lock of black hair brought down the forehead, which, in its longitude, seems as if the owner wore a pigtail the wrong way. The forehead is tolerably ample—nay, we have seen a much worse with "statesman" written on it: the eyebrows slightly arched over large, rolling, black eyes, imparting a very distinguished stare to the possessor. The nose a prominent Roman; cheek bones high; mouth large; and complexion of saddle-leather. And the chin of this head—for there is no neck—is within two inches of the table, and about thirty from the ground. It seems as though a giant had been decapitated, and his head only put in the chair, to do the honours of

the feast. This head, however, has a body; albeit, as happens with much genius, unworthy of its greatness. And there is, at intervals, a frank, kind smile breaking through the melancholy of the huge cheeks, that shows General Pompey—for it is no less a person—to be a genial fellow: moreover, there is an air in his mode of handing his snuff-box right and left, that proclaims at least the lighter graces of the gentleman. At this, however, the reader is not called upon to be surprised; General Pompey, in consequence of his extreme littleness, having, in his time, been patronised by all the courts of Europe. Unfortunately, in two or three instances, when he was in the full blaze of fortune, smaller men supplanted him; and he was compelled from time to time to take "a more removed ground," until fortune deposited him in the box of a showman, whence he had emerged to preside on the present occasion. Indeed, he was the great man with the tenants of the Hyacinth estate: nothing was to be done without the General, who, to say the truth, was at once the essence of good-breeding and the soul of liberality. "*Prenez-vous du tabac?*" said the president with a gracious smile, proffering an opened pewter box to a gentleman on his right, who was no other than young Hyacinth, roused from a study by the courteous solicitude. "The King of France hasn't such—at least, he *hadn't*," said the General, smiling on his guest; for it was by Pompey's special, though accidental introduction, that Hyacinth obtained a view of the motley scene before him. The young man, on leaving Peppercorn, had passed through two streets, when he heard the shrill cries of, as he thought, a child in danger; he followed the noise, and overtook a drunken porter, carrying on his head a basket, whence the sound proceeded. Hyacinth forced the man to set down his load, when out sprang the General, ignominiously caught up by the bacchanal, who endeavoured to excuse his cruelty, by stating that he had promised a plaything to his children. The General drew his sword, and breathed blood and murder. Hyacinth restrained the warrior in his vengeance; and, his wrath a little subsided, he insisted that his preserver should accompany him to a place, where, at least, he would find a good supper, and a hearty welcome. Smiling at the adventure, Hyacinth consented, and to his astonishment, was led by the fields into the very house in which he was born. Again, what was his surprise to find at the table, the old man—Peppercorn sat, or rather wriggled, on the General's left—whom he had left so passionately! To Hyacinth, all was mystery; but he was determined to seek it out.

Peppercorn, to do him justice, ate on the present occasion as with a practised appetite. He, too, though sadly perplexed by

his unprofitable tenants, was excited by a strange curiosity to see further into their habits. Here was an accident! The rich landlord the guest of vagabonds and mendicants, in his now dilapidated mansion, seated face to face with his wronged nephew, who, but for the chance which brought him to the same board, had gone supperless to bed!

Next to Peppercorn, was a hard-working, worthy person, with gray hair, and chalky lack-a-daisical face, who, that he might have ample room for his meals at home, would do nothing when abroad—to the wonder and compassion of the multitude—but vomit pebbles, pins, nails, and other small ware. And the honest people perceiving that he could swallow stones, never failed to press upon him money to buy bread.

Opposite to the stone-eater, and next to Hyacinth, was a famous posture-master, who would disguise and degrade his anatomy in a thousand ways, for the which he rarely failed to meet with public compensation. His principal feat, however, was the snake trick; for he would cast himself upon the earth, and move along it in undulations as quickly and as lithely as the living reptile. We once knew a minister to throw him a guinea from the window of his drawing-room, in pure admiration of this peculiar motion. Whenever his other tricks failed he began to creep, and success was certain.

A little lower down was a bankrupt schoolmaster. As he refused to birch the few pupils he got together, they were one by one withdrawn from him by anxious parents, who allowed that he was a good sort of a man, but very uninformed; in fact, quite ignorant of the proper end of scholarship. For some time, the pedagogue starved in silent magnanimity. At length, however, he took another pupil; one with no father or mother to govern master or disciple: he took a pig.—The which sagacious, and therefore much scandalised animal, he taught to draw any card desired—to tell a lady whether she were maid or wife, or when she would cease to be either—to point out the initial of a lover's name—to grunt for the King, and be silent for the Pretender—or to grunt for the Pretender, and be silent for the King, as the politics of the party might be. These, with other accomplishments on the part of the hog, brought the tutor more tangible good than it would have been wise for him to hope from biped youth.

Nearly fronting the schoolmaster was a great theoretical philanthropist, who had reduced himself to the pangs of hunger by expending his patrimony in the printing of tracts that should disabuse the human mind of all its vices and weaknesses, saving it from its own evils, and the snares of others, and should at

once and for ever destroy the empiric in every shape and colour. He fortunately rescued himself from starvation by marrying the widow of a mountebank, vending her late husband's inventions on a most respectable stage, assisted by one of the best paid jack-puddings of the day.

Not far from the philanthropic mountebank was a great navigator. For many, many years he had, to his own satisfaction, convinced the world of the existence of a North-west Passage. He had, however, turned his genius for discovery to a more profitable channel; and faithfully told the whereabout of lost spoons, stolen linen, and strayed cattle.

Further down the table was a philosophic visionary, who spent all his inheritance in preaching against the outward vanities of life—the paintings and the trappings, and the false, fleeting finery of sophistication. He brought himself to rags; but in a lucky hour hit upon an expedient that in some way restored him: for it was he who originated the custom of gilding gingerbread.

The last person we shall especially notice, started as a sort of saint. He was willing to turn hermit for life; to live upon pulse and water, and never look upon the face, never hear the voice, of a female. He afterwards became the contented husband of the woman with the beard—a second Barbara Urseline—to be viewed for a penny at every fair in the country.

(There is hardly a sadder feeling than that which arises from a contrast of our early ennobling aspirations—our proud vauntings of invulnerability, and our trumpet-tongued defiance of all threats and blandishments to win us from the one great purpose of our soul, with our final miserable realities—our low confessions of weakness—our small-voiced defence of the fear or the wile that has tempted us from the highway, which we thought would lead to all things. How few are there who, starting in youth, animated by great motives, do not, at thirty, seem to have suffered a "second fall!" What angel-purposes did they woo—and what hag-realities have they married! What Rachels have they thought to serve for—and what Leahs has the morning dawned upon! But, we are among vagabonds, it may be said, and this strain is a little out of place. By your leave—no. There is, to our mind, more matter for sweet and bitter melancholy in the flaunting tawdry of a zany, than in the embroidered suit of a fine gentleman—more stuff, pregnant with more curious and touching contrast, in the fantastic rags of your true vagabond, than in the sleek garments of the man of all proprieties. We have not particularised one-third of the supper-eaters, and yet, even those we have named, may they not—

contrasting their original motives with their settled habits—be compared with at least fifty of our acquaintance, albeit, we admit no similitude to our immaculate selves? But we have done.)

"Gentlemen," said the General, taking a jug of ale, "never let us forget what is due to our landlord." Peppercorn unconsciously drew himself upright. "He is a most excellent person, and may he never have worse tenants!" There was a general growl of applause—a knocking upon the table—and then a derisive cry of "our landlord!"

"Come, sir, you don't drink," said Pompey to Hyacinth; "our landlord!"

"I pray, excuse me, I—I happen to know the gentleman," said the visitor.

"What!" cried Peppercorn, unconscious of the word.

"You *do?*" was the loud interrogative; and all looked upon Hyacinth as a spy in the camp, to be straightway delivered up to the enemy. This question was immediately followed by glances of reproach cast at the General, who declared that he would answer with his head for the honour of his guest.

"All very fine," said the stone-eater, in a low voice to Peppercorn; "take my word for it," and he slapped Isaac emphatically on the thigh, "we must all flit—the game's up."

Peppercorn, though wondering at the assurance of Hyacinth, threw a look of entreaty towards him: at this instant, however, there was a loud knocking at the street-door. Every man sprang to his feet, and stared for information in the face of his fellow.

CHAPTER V.

We trust the reader has not forgotten the eccentric stranger who first informed Hyacinth of the supernatural visitors haunting the estate.

"Flittermouse!" exclaimed the General, as the new comer entered, "who's that?"

"A runaway knock," said Flittermouse, for such was the name of the speaker; who, with little ceremony, seated himself at the table, and lifted to his plate the thigh of a turkey. "I say, gentlemen," he observed, after the first mouthful, "are you all ready with your rents, for I can tell ye our landlord is among us?"

"Among us!" was the general shout, and Peppercorn sat frozen to his chair.

"That is, he will be; for he's sent his bedding. I say, General —ha! ha! we must strike our tents."

"What is this?" asked the General, with great dignity. "Speak, Flittermouse. What danger threatens the tranquillity of our happy fireside? What oppression menaces our bond of brotherhood? Rents! Gracious Powers! Rents!" Would our pen could show the disgust in every face, save that of Peppercorn, at the word. "Speak, Flittermouse," added the General, with the air of an emperor.

"You see, I was coming home, when I overtook Sheepskin's man—I knew him because I used to go with the show to Sheepskin's, at Christmas; only I lost his custom, because in the fight with the devil and the lawyer, I wouldn't give the lawyer the best of it. What's a show without a moral? 'The devil,' says I"——

"Never mind the devil—forget your private interest in the general good," said Pompey—"What about the landlord?"

"Well, Sheepskin's man told me that the bundle at his back was the bed of the landlord; that he was come to town; that he was coming here; and that his name was"—— at this moment, and for the first time at table, Flittermouse saw young Hyacinth; he paused and, with dropt jaw, stared at him.

Hyacinth, however, concluded the sentence for the showman, tranquilly pronouncing the word "Peppercorn," whilst the unfortunate owner of the name shrunk from it as from a presented pistol.

"Well remembered," said the General, turning to Hyacinth; "you said, sir, that you knew this landlord?"

"True, sir; I know him for a sordid, heartless miser; a wretch devoid of common sympathy; a cur, who"—— Hyacinth was proceeding in his invective, when the features and changing attitudes of Peppercorn, his looks of abject entreaty, his upraised shoulders and his clasped hands, just visible above the table, struck the speaker with sudden conviction—"It is—I have him," thought Hyacinth; and a glow of fierce satisfaction possessed him as he leaned his arms upon the board, and looked as he would look into the very brain of his uncle.

"Well, let him be good or bad," said the pebble-eater, "we've had many a carouse out of his marble mantelpieces and his leaden waterspouts—and I say, old boy," and the speaker gave Peppercorn a rough bacchanal tug by the collar—"I say, but—but what's your name?"

This untimely question awakened a general curiosity, and Peppercorn had given himself up for a sacrifice, when he remembered the name bestowed upon him by the picker-of-oakum, and

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with a side look of entreaty at Hyacinth, and in a voice made hoarse by terror, he breathed from his husky throat, "Pat—Patt—i—son."

"I'll answer for him," said the late prisoner, evidently deceived by the fortunate resemblance between Peppercorn and some decayed old gentleman who lived on begging-epistles.—Happily, his wardrobe assisted the delusion.

"It *is* he," murmured Hyacinth to himself, and smiled bitterly upon the miser.

"All I say is this," resumed the stone-eater, "we've sold all the lead from off his houses for liquor, and—why you don't drink!" cried the jovial vagabond to the amazed landlord. "Come, empty it," and he forced a cup upon Peppercorn—"it's the last of the spouts. Drink!"

And Peppercorn did drink; though had the draught been molten lead itself, instead of brandy purchased by the running metal, he had not drunk in greater torture.

"There's one good thing," cried the posture-master, "if all the lead's gone, there's plenty of iron on the premises. And since the landlord is such a rascal, I'll not go without a supper till we've eat down to the very knockers."

"That was a capital feast we had out of all the locks," cried the philanthropist.

"It was the banquet of honesty, when we supped off what was invented for rogues," rejoined the schoolmaster.

"But the gentleman can tell us further of our landlord," said General Pompey; "let us hear more of his character, that we may proportion our rewards to his merits. Our landlord's character!"

"Our landlord's character!" was the general shout. And Hyacinth, his eyes still glowing upon Peppercorn, proceeded to state that the houses had been the portion of the miser's sister; that her husband, after gallantly struggling with accumulated ill-fortune, sank in the strife. The property having been mortgaged to Peppercorn for a trifling sum, he seized upon it, turning his sister and her infant son upon the world.

"And what became of the poor creatures, sir?" asked the dwarf.

"The mother died," said Hyacinth, scarcely controlling his emotion. "Yes—her blood is on her brother's hands!"

"Blood!" cried all, Peppercorn himself being surprised into the exclamation.

"The worst of blood," said Hyacinth, gazing at his uncle—"the blood of a broken heart. She died."

"And—and"—there was a power stirring in Peppercorn that

spite of himself forced him to the question—" and, for you seem to know much of the story, the—the boy, sir ?"

" 'Twas from him I had the history," said Hyacinth ; " we were in the same regiment. Your nephew"——

" Nephew ! " cried Peppercorn—and " Nephew ! " echoed all.

" I mean the landlord's nephew—he, poor fellow, he was shot in Flanders !"

Peppercorn stifled a groan, as there rose from each of the party an expression of hate and disgust towards his unknown self. He tried to struggle against the feeling ; but the sickness of death seemed to grow upon him, as he heard his name coupled with a curse.

" What a rascal ! " cried one. " Well, I'm glad we stript the lead."

" A villain ! " exclaimed a second. "Why, we'll have such suppers ; we won't leave one brick upon another." And this the speaker uttered with the sense of one who proposes a magnanimous action.

" We'll eat off every roof, and cut the floors into matches," said a third, with considerable energy.

" If the landlord don't prevent us, gentlemen," observed the General ; " and we have something more to hear of him from Flittermouse. Did Sheepskin's man say that Peppercorn was really come ?"

" That he'd be here this very night—that he wouldn't pay for lodging, but would sleep here while he stayed in London. I began the old story to the man about the badness of the neighbourhood," said Flittermouse.

" And the ghosts haunting the houses ? " asked the General.

" Yes," replied Flittermouse, in melancholy tone ; and then drawing a long sigh, he added, " Ha ! General, the world's going to bits—a ghost isn't what it used to be ; people get so hardened in their wickedness there's no frightening 'em now. I know it by the falling off in my profession. For my part, I don't know where it will end. Now-a-days they'd suffer Dr. Faustus to live in peace and quietness, and let him be buried handsomely with mourners." (We may here inform the reader that when Flittermouse alludes to his profession, he speaks of his mystical employment in the conduct of a gallantee-show.)

" Well, gentlemen," observed the General, " we are now called upon to defend our home against the license of an invader, who would not only chase us from our hearth-stone, but very possibly would carry his malignity still further, by demanding rent for premises we have occupied. Nay, as there is no telling where such a man would stop—you have all heard from this gentle-

man of what he is capable—he might, such is revenge in base natures, demand satisfaction from the law upon us for the mantelpieces, the leaden pipes, the locks, and other materials found upon the premises, and of which we have availed ourselves to satisfy our natural wants. Gentlemen, we have arrived at a most important crisis. I therefore wish to put this question to the collective wisdom of the meeting: weigh it well, consider it deeply, but answer it quickly. The question is this—Should Mr. Peppercorn come among us, what shall we do with him?—Yes, gentlemen, such is the question. What, I ask, what shall we, as tenants careful of their own interests, do with our landlord?"

A dead pause followed the query. All were evidently struck by the importance of the subject, especially Peppercorn, who moved his head mechanically from side to side, looking in the faces of his judges, and, without speaking, working his jaws like the jaws of an ape. The pause continued; when, on the question being put a third time, the General asking—

"What shall we do with our landlord?"

"Cut his throat!" was the deep decisive answer; the gentleman who gave this advice being Muzzleby, the master of the dancing bear.

"Cut his throat!" cried Muzzleby.

"Ugh! ugh!" cried Peppercorn.

"What do you say?" said the stone-eater, turning to Isaac.

"The gentleman says nothing," remarked Muzzleby; "but you can see that he's of my opinion. Every feature in his face cries—'Cut his throat!'"

CHAPTER VI.

"Gentlemen," said the gallantee-showman, and he spoke to a select few determined on seeing out the night over their cups, "I hate suspicion, but there's some folks won't let you be charitable. Now, that's one of 'em," and Flittermouse nodded his head towards Peppercorn, who, having vainly tried to escape from the house, sat upon a low stool, where, overcome by the brandy forced upon him, he had fallen fast asleep. "Try as I will with myself, I can't like him," said Flittermouse, surveying his landlord.

"You don't think he's out of the trade?" asked Muzzleby.

"Humph! There is a something, to be sure, about him,"

remarked the gallantee-showman, "and yet he doesn't look a thorough vagabond."

"Perhaps not," said the schoolmaster, "but it isn't fair to judge by looks."

"I'll wake him," cried the showman, with a knowing wink; and then approaching the miser, he laid his hand upon the sleeper's shoulder, and shaking him, asked, "Won't you go to bed?"

"Bed a—shilling!" mumbled Peppercorn, recurring to his first injury.

"Bed and blankets are brought for you, Mr. Peppercorn," and Flittermouse shouted the name so loudly in the ear of its possessor, that he jumped up as though awakened by the blast of a trumpet.

"Peppercor"— stammered Isaac, looking about; and then, with sudden presence of mind, affecting a grim smile, he asked —shaking to the toes as he put the question—" Where *is* Mr. Peppercorn?"

"They've brought his bed," answered the showman, with a scrutinising look. "He can go to sleep as soon as he likes, and then, you know, we can"——

"Cut his throat," interrupted Peppercorn, with a look of ghastly merriment, and he felt suddenly tongue-tied, and his knees knocked together. The truth is, the bedding promised by Sheepskin had arrived; that is, it had been thrown down at the door-step; the porter, after having loudly knocked, running away, believing, as he fled, that a whole legion of ghosts from the Hyacinth estate was pursuing him. Peppercorn, releasing himself from the showman, sidled softly towards young Hyacinth, who sat apart, and, with folded arms and his hat drawn over his brow, gloomily contemplated the scene about him. The General had quitted the house—the van in which he travelled starting early in the morning to a fair in Essex and many of the revellers had slunk, one by one, to their several beds of feather, flock, and straw. Flittermouse, Muzzleby, the tutor of the learned pig, and the inventor of gilt gingerbread, with young Hyacinth, who felt spell-bound to the spot, and who was determined to watch his uncle, alone composed the waking conclave when Peppercorn was roused to join it. The schoolmaster and the philosopher continued to play at put, the showman and the dancing-master thinking, and at the same time drinking deeply.

"Ha so—you knew that poor lad?" asked Peppercorn, in a shiver, and looking fawningly upon Hyacinth, who turned upon the miser an eye of fire. "I have heard—a—a brave lad; and dead! dear me—dear me!"

"His death distresses you?" asked Hyacinth. "Doubtless, as a friend of Mr. Pepperc"——

"Hush!" and Isaac, grasping Hyacinth's hand, breathed heavily, as he turned to look upon his unprofitable tenants; "you have a good face—I can see it; a kind face: you wouldn't like to see an old man's blood?"

"Why, what's the matter?" said Hyacinth, moved by the white face and palsied limbs of his uncle. "What do you fear?"

"You are a stranger like myself—I can trust you," cried Peppercorn, and he shook more violently.

"Are you sure of that?" asked Hyacinth, with a look of bitterness, that increased the terror of the old man.

"Do you want"—and Peppercorn drew himself up to his nephew's ear, and whispered, "do you want money—honest, honest money?—Tell me where you're to be found, and what's your means," and the miser tried to assume the air of a patron.

"For the place," said Hyacinth, resolved to increase the terrors of Isaac, "Finchley; for my means, a blood-mare and quick triggers." Isaac fell, as if stabbed, from the speaker; and casting his eyes from ceiling to floor, he wrung his withered hands, and in the impotence of fear, moaned, "murdered! murdered! shut up for the knife!" then turning to Hyacinth, he cried, "Unhappy youth; but it isn't true: no—no—it can't be: you have such an honest face—I say you have," said Peppercorn, in a wheedling tone, and his features puckered with smiles. "What! a soldier, and turn highwayman? No—no—no; Help me, hush! speak low, or those thieves—help me from this house, and"——

"Lost again!" roared the philosopher at put; and with the face of a balked satyr, he flung the cards down upon the floor; "I claim revenge: where's the checkers?"

"With all my heart," said the swinish tutor; "here's the table," and he took a piece of board, rudely marked for draughts, from a nook near Hyacinth, who leaped from his seat as the man turned from him, and seized the board from his hand. The panel devoted to the purposes of play bore the portrait of a beautiful woman: time and injury had obscured its excellence, but not destroyed it.

For a moment young Hyacinth stood with the picture in his hands, and then pressing it to his lips, and tears gushing from his eyes, he exclaimed, "Mother, dear mother!" and fell like a drunken man upon his chair.

"Mother!" cried Peppercorn, with a hoarse scream, and then he looked like a thief caught in the fact.

"Mother!" exclaimed the four tenants, Muzzleby appending to the word a long whistle, expressive of his astonishment.

"My nephew!" croaked Peppercorn in his throat, scarcely deigning to look for Hyacinth.

"It is true, my friends; this is the picture of her who—oh! the villain brother!" cried the young man, and Peppercorn shrunk into himself. "Where—tell me, where was this found?"

"In a cupboard, among some lumber: we wanted a board, but we spared the pictur'," said the bear-leader.

"But *your* mother?" asked Flittermouse, lost in the mystery.

"I was born beneath this roof: the houses were my mother's—they——"

"What then," cried the schoolmaster, very sagaciously, "you are nephew to that old rascal, our landlord?"

"That scoundrel Peppercorn!" remarked the inventor of gilt gingerbread. "Isn't that odd, now?" said the gilder, turning to Peppercorn himself, who, by his gestures, for he was voiceless with astonishment and fear, declared his sense of the extraordinary accident.

"Well, if I'd known as much, I'd never talked such stuff to you about the ghosts," said Flittermouse. "Only, you see, it's our duty to spread such stories to keep tenants from the houses. But I say," and the showman struck his leg as though he had fallen upon a golden discovery,—"Peppercorn, your uncle, will come here. Now, only let us catch him, and then we'll"——

"Cut his throat," said Muzzleby, bigoted to what, in common with many Roman emperors, he considered a catholic mode of redress.

"Or bind him hand and foot, and throw him to the bear," meekly observed the schoolmaster.

"Well," said the philosopher to Hyacinth, "there's one comfort; your uncle will go to the devil."

"And what's worse"—— rejoined Flittermouse.

"What can be worse?" cried Peppercorn, for it was impossible he could silently hear himself thus variously disposed of;—"what can be worse?"

"Why, when he gets there," said the showman, "he must be such bad company, nobody will speak to him."

CHAPTER VII.

The night passed, and Isaac remained a prisoner "at home." He had been invited in a manner which admitted of no refusal, to retire to the bed sent by Sheepskin for the landlord—Flittermouse, as Isaac thought, sarcastically observing, that the pallet would do just as well for Pattison as Peppercorn. All night did Isaac lie sleepless, planning means of escape. He was but too well convinced by the tone and looks of young Hyacinth that he was discovered; and in the meanness of his own nature, had no thought, no hope of mercy. As he lay, Providence Hall glittered like a temple of crystal before him; Biddy, the housekeeper, arose in smiling self-complacency; Cupid, the terrier, seemed to wag his tail in mockery of greeting; yea, the defunct white horse, once more bit the bare brown common; and all the old familiar things tortured him with recollections of the happy past. "They'll murder me, and lay my death upon the ghosts," said Peppercorn to himself a hundred times. And then he thought of the manifold rogueries of Sheepskin, of the rent paid by the Dutch money-lender; "for that could be no invention," concluded the miser, in his avarice; of the bartered mantel-pieces, the locks, and the lead. "I knew it—I knew it—I shall die in the workhouse—I said I should—a pauper, yes, a pauper," he cried aloud.

"Well, if you must, can't you die without making a noise about it?" exclaimed the voice of Muzzleby to the disconsolate miser, who crawled from the inner room into the apartment where the bear-leader sat enjoying his tobacco. "Well, I'm sure, you're mighty particular, Mr. Pattison," and the smoker, staring at Peppercorn, blew clouds of smoke into his face. "Where are you going?" asked Muzzleby, in a voice of thunder, seeing Isaac shuffling near the door.

"I—it's a raw morning, and I—I've a coldness at the stomach, and I've forgot my ginger," said Peppercorn: "I—it's my only remedy,—I shall die without it."

"Sorry, but you must then," calmly observed the smoker; "nobody goes out to-day: don't you know we expect our landlord? Well, you *are* cold!" Isaac shook as with the ague. "I tell you what do, as you can't stir for ginger, suppose you go and warm yourself helping little Nick and Dogstar in the cellar."

"Helping!—in the cellar! What are they doing?" cried Peppercorn.

"Digging a hole." Isaac stared. "Don't I tell you our landlord's coming! well, that's the hole where they're going to bury him."

"Bury him! Horrible!" shrieked Peppercorn.

"A shame and a sin to bury him, I say,—when it costs so much to keep my bear;" and Muzzleby, shutting his eyes, leaned his head back, and, with half-closed lips, gently puffed out the smoke.

"And the wretches will really kill"——

"No abuse, Mr. Pattison; we shall do what becomes men with a troublesome landlord."

"And where—where's the young man?" asked Isaac, for the moment placing his hopes on Hyacinth.

"He's in the street to watch when Peppercorn comes;—well, then, as soon as he opens the door, and gets into the passage," and Muzzleby laid his hand upon the arm of the old man, sending a cold thrill through his bones,—"there's a couple of stout lads, who——" At this moment, Peppercorn thought he heard a sudden scuffling down stairs, and, with a howl, and scarce knowing whither he went, he rushed back into his room, and rolled himself up in the blankets. He remained trembling and listening for a full hour, when the dancing-master opened the door, and cried in his softest and most amiable tones—"Pattison, my old boy, it's all over."

"Dead!" groaned Peppercorn.

"And buried," answered Muzzleby, in the same note.

"Somebody in mistake for me," thought Peppercorn; "perhaps, Sheepskin;" and he smiled and clasped his hands under the blankets. "What a blessing is upon me!"

For the whole day Peppercorn remained swathed in his blankets, not daring to venture forth. At all times abstemious as a hermit, he less than ever felt the want of food, so was he worn by the horror of the past and the dread of the present. The evening approached, and the landlord resigned himself to his fate for another night, hoping, and almost praying, for release on the morrow. It was near midnight when Peppercorn awoke from a feverish sleep—from dreams of terror: it was some moments ere he could shake off the influence of the vision, so strongly did it possess him. At length he became assured of his waking being, and of the real dangers that thronged about him. He began to try his memory for some prayer learned in his boyhood, and for a brief moment his heaps of gold seemed to the miser no more than ashes, when a speck of light, as from a

star, beamed in the darkness. He held his breath, and grasped the blankets, the veins of his bony hands swelling like earthworms. The light increased,—and his eyes grew big with horror, and his heart seemed to stop its beating, and his voice died in his throat, as he gazed upon a mortal face—the face of his wronged sister! The spectre, with its fixed eyes, approached the bed,—the lips of the old man moved, but his tongue was jellied in his mouth;—as the shade came nearer, the miser drew his frozen legs upwards, and clutching the blanket, he tore it in his hand as he rose—such strength did terror give his years—as it had been woven of the finest thread. Still the spectre came nearer, when the terrified wretch, his back fairly creeping up the wall, stood upon his feet to confront it. He stood in the bed, his face white and wet as reeking chalk, and his mouth open as with the death-gasp. In a moment, all was dark; and the miser, with a thrilling shriek, fell huddled in a heap upon the bed!

CHAPTER VIII.

To the day of his death—which did not happen for some years after this awful vision—Isaac Peppercorn persisted in the belief that his injured sister had appeared to chide him for his past iniquities, and to warn him from future evil. Be this as it may, the delusion worked its good effect; for Isaac asked forgiveness of his nephew, supplied him with plentiful means, and at last bequeathed him the whole of his fortune. To be sure, Peppercorn owed a deep debt of gratitude to young Hyacinth, for, without his interference, the landlord had met with a most scurvy reception from his vagabond tenants, though we do not believe with the exact fate advised by Muzzleby, that eccentric personage not being in his nature quite so sanguinary as he delighted to declare himself. For the ghost, we cannot conscientiously acquit Flittermouse of all suspicion; for, it will be remembered, that he had his magic lantern, in full operation: and for the portrait of the mother of Hyacinth, the showman, with a good taste for art, had had it copied as one of the prime beauties of this exhibition, though certainly not at the festive time, when he attended the family of Mr. Sheepskin. That learned gentleman did not without considerable difficulty persuade Mr. Peppercorn that his inattentive stewardship of the Hyacinth estate proceeded from the best motives; though

there were ill-natured people who protested that the attorney suffered them to go to ruin that they might drop a bargain into his own hands. Indeed, very often when Peppercorn touched upon the subject, though Sheepskin used all his eloquence to prove the purity of his motives, the landlord would consent to be only half convinced, observing in conclusion—

"Well, it may be as you say, Sheepskin;—I say, it may be that no rents were ever paid,—and yet I don't know, I'm not quite easy in my mind about that Guilders, the Dutchman."

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CHAPTER I.

"Truth," says John Milton, is "rarely born, but, like a bastard, to the shame of him who begets it." Let not the veracious reader start at this dreary faith; for the same author goes on to declare, that time at length legitimatises the baseborn, and removes the odium from its father. Thus, though the living martyr may be burned to cinders, it may so happen that the greatest veneration shall be paid to his ashes. Now—as we are given to understand from gentlemen of the learned profession, members of parliament, party politicians, and other consumers of the precious manna—though truth be an inestimable treasure, still for that reason it is not to be produced on every light occasion. In the first place, a too great familiarity with it begets indifference. To be always speaking the truth, what is it but to wear a court-suit every day—to go shopping in hoop, stomacher, and diamonds? It was a most wise apophthegm, that of a late attorney, whose only son—how he acquired the antipathy yet remains a mystery—had an invincible aversion to a lie. "Joseph," said the father, with something like tears in his eyes, "Joseph, Heaven knows how soon I may be taken from you, and therefore I cannot too frequently check your preposterous extravagance. Truth, Joseph, truth is like gold; a really wise man makes a little of it go a great way." To our mind, nothing can be finer, nothing more profound than this axiom. Truth *is* like gold; for how often does a reckless use of it bring its utterer to beggary! Let the fate of our hero be taken as an example.

"One pound one—the bird is yours, sir, cage and all." Thus spoke Mr. Green, the auctioneer, declaring a parrot, one of a dozen that had been twenty times put up without a purchaser, to be the property of the guinea-bidder. The owner of the bird

knew not the dangerous treasure he possessed. The parrot was a very Solomon in feathers; and, though its possessor failed to appreciate the virtue, like true wisdom, it was sparing of speech. Its master, mistaking silence for inability, disposed of the bird as a blockhead, though, if it liked, it could, fifty times a day have called itself a clever fellow. However, there was this besetting sin in the bird,—it never opened its mouth, but it uttered an awkward truth, blurted out a sentence turned with satire, reproach, or contempt. What it said would, at times, fall with a fatal crash upon the cogitations of its hearers, making them doubt if Beelzebub spoke not through a parrot. Unfortunately for its future quiet, its long sojourn in the room of the auctioneer had enabled it to store its memory with the choicest scraps of the orator; which undigested exclamations, interrogatories, opinions, and appeals, it would too frequently utter to the confusion of its owners.

Our martyr to truth—the parrot—became the property of the lady of Mr. Focion, a gentleman who had struggled through many difficulties to become a member of Parliament, some of his difficulties being considerably lessened by the attainment of the dignity: yes; he was a senator, to the confusion of his tailor. He was a man of considerable powers of address, being heard at any part of Copenhagen-fields, whenever he there condescended to deliver his sentiments. As his opinions were not fixed, he was in the happiest condition for improvement. If he had not read a great deal of history, he had attended and spoken at many public dinners. If he had cared to shine that way, he could have argued in the style of Fox or Burke; but the days were gone for rhetorical speeches: no, the spirit of the times demanded brevity, and it was much easier to call names. Indeed, Mr. Focion successfully exercised that great art of life—the art of gracefully concealing our ignorance. He was a man with a face of undaunted metal, and with nerves of equally strong, if not of the same material. Sublimely unconscious of the ridiculous, he soared above his own deficiencies, and was never so elevated as when utterly incomprehensible. Though not quite sufficiently skilled in the graces of literature to become a professor of poetry, he never made a speech without the support of the muse. No, never did he speak of the "poor man," but the oration was decked with that fringe of untarnished gold—

> Princes and lords may flourish and may fade,
> A breath can make them as a breath has made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

On what he would call the philosophy of society, he had his own recondite opinions, for the adoption of which, as he would often lament, the world was not yet sufficiently prepared. That, however, all the generations of man had been begotten and educated on a wrong principle, was his unconquerable faith. With a severe disregard of the ornaments and what are called refinements of life, he would have looked on the statue of the Medicean Venus, and asked—*cui bono?* Or, in his own downright nervous English—"What's the use of it?" He would have resigned the Elgin marbles to the hammers of Mac Adam, and covered a polling-booth with the canvasses of Raphael. In a word, he was a mushroom patriot, a thing produced by the corruption of the times. Yet, let it not be thought that Mr. Focion would recant his faith in the hour of danger. Not so; he rather courted persecution. Often would he declare his readiness to lay his head upon the block; and so entirely was his wife influenced by some of his patriotic sentiments, that she would hear him with more than Roman serenity. As for the Queen's Bench prison, it was the vestibule to the house of fame: and Newgate itself might, to a public man, become little less than the Mint. And this was the exalted creed of Mr. Focion, until a full week after his admission to the House of Commons. We know not whether such a happy change comes upon all young members, but certainly, Mr. Focion talked less, and at least appeared more thoughtful. And this serious mood took a deeper shadow from a sermon, which the senator accidentally heard, on the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. Mrs. Focion remarked it, and ventured to observe, that nowhere could we get such true consolation as at church. Mr. Focion looked pale and severely calm as the bust of Brutus —but replied not.

It was an evening on which there was "no house," and Mr. and Mrs. Focion sat with the only thing that ought ever to divide man and wife—namely, a book, between them. The book was *Malthus on Population.* Our statesman had no children; and Mrs. Focion, who had merely looked at the title-page of the volume, contemplated her husband at his new studies with singular complacency. She would look meekly at her mate, and, in the pride of her heart, feel certain that some public or private good must come of such hard reading. Mr. Focion put aside the book, and leaned his head on his hand.

"'Tis now two months since you've taken your seat, my dear; pray when do you think you'll get anything?"

"Get anything?" responded Mr. Focion; "what should I get, but the proud satisfaction of—of—I desire, madam, that you

never again allude to so base a sentiment. Get anything! I should despise myself could I be induced to take office."

"Well, but a salary," observed Mrs. Focion—"or—a something that"—Mr. Focion frowned very darkly, and his wife was silent. Weeks went on, and Mr. Focion gradually lost that serenity of temper, which, up to his return to Parliament, had made his house a dove-cot. Mrs. Focion, in the simplicity of her soul, thought that law-making could not be so very respectable an employment, if it kept husbands out until four and five in the morning; and then sent them home more like ogres than rational, considerate helpmates. To do Mr. Focion justice, no member was more regular in his attendance, more sedulous in his indirect attentions to the minister, more watchful of the public money. Still, it was but too evident that the dearest wish of his heart was unsatisfied. His merits and his zeal were alike undiscerned. He had, it is true, a vote in the house, but for what it brought him, he might as well have had a voice in the Great Pyramid. Again and again, Mrs. Focion touched upon the probability of fallen manna; and again and again Mr. Focion, with grimmer looks and more passionate voice, declared that he should feel himself a wretch for ever could he be won to accept anything. "No! to him, place was little better than the pillory. He would maintain his independence—he would return to his constituents with white hands."

Mrs. Focion marvelled at the obstinacy of the man; and one morning, after a late debate, resolved to speak out. "What! was he mad enough to refuse a salary, for—if it pleased Providence—doing nothing? Was he"——

"Mrs. Focion, I have seen too many sad examples of political tergiversation, to add to the black number. I have seen the patriot of to-day, the pensioner of to-morrow." Mrs. Focion seemed to smile approval of the promotion. "But no; be it my glory to prove that there is still some public virtue left. And know, if I hold off from golden temptation—if I refuse, with inexpressible scorn, to sell myself to the minister—it is for this proud reason, that I have had"——

"*No bidders!*"

"Good God! who's that?" cried the patriot, turning pale as though called by the accusing angel.

"*No bidders! no bidders! no bidders!*" replied the parrot from its auction vocabulary.

Mr. Focion stared and gasped at the bird, as if a demon spoke in it—a malignant spirit that had possessed itself of the heart of the stateman's mystery—of the secret that had lain like an ulcer in his heart, tormenting him with scheming days

and anxious nights. There was something awful—appalling—supernatural in the words; or rather, there was a terrible humanity in them, that, as the patriot glared upon the bird, suggested to him the probability of a metempsychosis. "Had a Sir Robert Walpole been transmigrated into a parrot?"

"In the name of heaven! Mrs. Focion," said her husband, taking breath from his astonishment, "where did you get that plague?"

"*No bidders!*" said the irritating parrot. Unhappily, there lay upon the table a copy of the report of the Law Commission. It will give the reader a very favourable idea of Mr. Focion's strength, when we state that he seized the tome with one hand, and flung it at the speaker. The corner of the book caught the right eye of the bird, and extinguished its light. We ardently trust the only case of blindness effected by the "commission."

"Nay, I'm sure, my dear"—it was all in vain; Mrs. Focion, with all her eloquence, failed to convince the member of the many little amiable ways of her loquacious treasure; and well she might, for every morning after a long and heavy debate, Mr. Focion jaded, drowsy, bilious, was accosted by the parrot with a loud protracted chuckle, and "no bidders!"

In a very short time the parrot was thrust, with curses on its head, from the hearth of the senator.

Mr. Focion, we regret to say, in due season illustrated the instability of human genius; for he accepted a place, which he held until his speedy death; a fact commemorated on a tombstone in that extensive churchyard, Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER II.

LAURENCE MARVEDI was a man of gold. His boyish practices and shifts had been those of a miser. He was now upwards of sixty, of an infirm constitution, but of immense worldly possessions. As he grew older, his passion for wealth absorbed every feeling, every sentiment, every hope, every fear, save one, the fear of death; and this dread he ever sought to escape from, by retreating to the contemplation of his hoards. He would almost persuade himself of the impossibility of death striking him amidst his treasures. Poor wretch! he had, through life, seen nothing beyond a guinea, and could not now look forward. He had had no sympathy with men; with his money-bags he had made a wall between his heart and them; and he shuddered,

and could hardly suppress a howl, as he thought of the common doom that would involve him, naked, shivering, stripped of his privilege, with his kind. It was this horror of the grave, that made him anxiously avoid the sight of all types of mortality; that made him forbid his niece and housekeeper to breathe a word of death. His apothecary, taking the cue, showed no more knowledge of death than if he had been to him the greatest stranger. Now and then, his niece, gathering her information from the newspaper, would speak of a Russian peasant —it must be the paternal softness of the government that induces people to live so long in Russia—who had just died at a hundred and ninety. On this, a slimy smile would streak the face of Marvedi, who, however, would soon relapse into melancholy, pathetically declaring that, "Russia was not England!"

"There!—that bell—there again—new churches! ugh!" cried the man of wealth, and he clasped his hands, and set his teeth, and his back was bowed like a hoop, and he rocked from side to side in his arm-chair, as the passing-bell told the tale of death. Mr. Marvedi had, for thirty years, dwelt in a house far removed from

——the sound of the church-going bell;

when it pleased the functionaries, vested with that solemn power, to build within a few furlongs of his residence a sacred temple. Marvedi rarely stirring from his house, was altogether ignorant of the goodly work, until the bell assured him it was done. The miser was immediately resolved; he would flee from the spot; he would bury himself where his ears should not receive the horrid warning. Some preparation was, however, necessary; and, in the mean time, he was tortured almost daily by the knell of death. He would sit and gasp in silence; and, with his bony hands, clutch the arms of the chair; and his eyes would wander round the room, as if watching something; and then he would try to smile, when the bell would seem to strike upon his heart, and he would shrink like a slave from the uplifted scourge. It was a frightful sight to see the old man thus, with his sinful soul bare in his face. He would sit, and, until the bell ceased, howl and mutter—"Another?—and rich they say,—with half a million, perhaps, and to die—Lord! Lord! to lose all—to be no longer prayed to—to enjoy no more law; but to be nailed up—thrust into a hole—and then the judgment!"—and here his locked hands would shake as with a palsy, and his speechless lips would move, and he would sit possessed by his conscience.

It was little more than an hour after one of these fits of

Marvedi, that Mr. Hopely, the doctor, made his morning-call. We must, however, premise, that his visits were ostensibly paid to Miss Fanny, the rich man's niece, Marvedi never consenting to believe that he himself was in want of medical advice, though every day he indirectly obtained it from his professional visitor. In this delusion he obstinately remained to the last; dying, in the end, with only the most delicate hint, on the part of Hopely, of his probable indisposition. When Marvedi was *in articulo mortis*, Hopely allowed that he might be a little poorly.

"Good-morning, Mr. Marvedi; good-morning, sir; ha! ha! never saw you looking better," said the courageous Mr. Hopely, staring in the slate-coloured face of the miser, and then pursing his mouth and raising his eyebrows, as he caught the eye of Fanny.

"Do you think so, Mr. Hopely? Do you really think so?" cried Marvedi whiningly, wishing to be cheated.

"Think so! why, you're like an oak, Mr. Marvedi: a handful of winters is nothing to you. And your pulse"—Marvedi was about to twitch his wrist from the hand of the lecturer—"delightful!" Marvedi held his wrist still; "so regular—so sound—the music of robust health. I have no doubt, at your age, Nestor had exactly the same pulse."

"Who was he?" asked the unlettered Plutus.

"Who? oh, an extraordinary man—lived a long time ago—but didn't die till he was six hundred," said Hopely, at a venture.

"Ha! the world has sadly changed, Mr. Hopely. Life was something in the time of Methusaleh," sighed Marvedi.

"The truth is, Mr. Marvedi, men insist upon killing themselves; otherwise, and I am religiously persuaded of the fact, any man, beginning with a fine constitution—a constitution like your own, for instance"—Marvedi cleared his throat, and tried to straighten his back—"might live to a thousand. All depends upon a wise temperance."

"I was never a glutton," interrupted Marvedi, folding his hands upon his breast.

"A wise temperance and a skilful doctor; not, understand me, to debilitate with drugs, but to sweeten the juices—to comfort with cordials. By the way, I have given the Arabian elixir to Fanny—three times a day, as before. There is nothing like temperance for long life. Look at Thomas Parr; bless me! it's very odd—I never remarked it before—you bear a great resemblance to the picture of Parr."

"What! old Parr?" asked Marvedi, with a grim smile.

"The same; the man who lived to upwards of a hundred and

fifty-two. Let me consider; yes, he saw out ten kings and queens."

"I have seen out three," said Marvedi.

"Then you have seven more to come," said the precise and encouraging apothecary. "Very singular! that I should not remark it before. Yes; the general expression of the head—the ample forehead—and the great power indicated in the jaw. I have no doubt, were a comparison possible, that you and he would be found"——

"What have you there, Fanny?" suddenly asked the counterpart of Thomas Parr.

"Oh! a present from Mr. Hopely," said the niece, fondling a parrot, which, we may as well inform the reader, was the bird of ill omen, banished, for its untimely truths, from the house of the law-maker. Mr. Hopely purchased it of a Jew, with whom Mrs. Focion had exchanged it for a figure in Nankin china.

"Parrots!" exclaimed Marvedi, leering discontent.

"Oh! a charming bird, uncle: sings all sorts of lively tunes"—such ran the warranty of the Jew—"and whistles 'Life let us cherish' like a Christian." The cheerfulness of the parrot's taste was not lost upon the man of wealth, who tacitly admitted the bird to his hospitality.

"It's not a squalling, shrieking, noisy wretch, with nothing to say for itself; but, as I am assured, a bird of capital education. You'll find it quite a companion to you; and as it is very young, and parrots live to a great age, I'm sure," and here Mr. Hopely took his hat, and shook Marvedi's hand; "I'm sure, you'll—extraordinary pulse—admirable pulse—you'll be fast friends for the next fifty years." Saying which, Mr. Hopely and Fanny quitted the room, to enjoy a conversation in which, doubtless, the health of Mr. Marvedi formed the principal subject.

Days passed on, and not a word was spoken, not a note whistled by the parrot—like a prudent alderman, it filled its belly without saying anything. It was a cold, blustering night in December, when Mr. Marvedi sat in his room—a room not to be approached by the profane of his household under the heaviest penalty. The apartment was almost filled with chests, bronzes, and pictures. There was an antique cabinet, studded and clasped with finely wrought brass, containing a vast treasure in *virtu* and jewels. From this Marvedi had taken several cases of diamonds, and now sat, gloating over their light, made more piercingly brilliant by the gloom of the muckthrift's den. He sat and passed his fingers over the gems, and, as if communing with sensible objects, in the imbecility of his soul chuckled and

star, beamed in the darkness. He held his breath, and grasped the blankets, the veins of his bony hands swelling like earthworms. The light increased,—and his eyes grew big with horror, and his heart seemed to stop its beating, and his voice died in his throat, as he gazed upon a mortal face—the face of his wronged sister! The spectre, with its fixed eyes, approached the bed,—the lips of the old man moved, but his tongue was jellied in his mouth;—as the shade came nearer, the miser drew his frozen legs upwards, and clutching the blanket, he tore it in his hand as he rose—such strength did terror give his years—as it had been woven of the finest thread. Still the spectre came nearer, when the terrified wretch, his back fairly creeping up the wall, stood upon his feet to confront it. He stood in the bed, his face white and wet as reeking chalk, and his mouth open as with the death-gasp. In a moment, all was dark; and the miser, with a thrilling shriek, fell huddled in a heap upon the bed!

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> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

On what he would call the philosophy of society, he had his own recondite opinions, for the adoption of which, as he would often lament, the world was not yet sufficiently prepared. That, however, all the generations of man had been begotten and educated on a wrong principle, was his unconquerable faith. With a severe disregard of the ornaments and what are called refinements of life, he would have looked on the statue of the Medicean Venus, and asked—*cui bono?* Or, in his own downright nervous English—"What's the use of it?" He would have resigned the Elgin marbles to the hammers of Mac Adam, and covered a polling-booth with the canvasses of Raphael. In a word, he was a mushroom patriot, a thing produced by the corruption of the times. Yet, let it not be thought that Mr. Focion would recant his faith in the hour of danger. Not so; he rather courted persecution. Often would he declare his readiness to lay his head upon the block; and so entirely was his wife influenced by some of his patriotic sentiments, that she would hear him with more than Roman serenity. As for the Queen's Bench prison, it was the vestibule to the house of fame: and Newgate itself might, to a public man, become little less than the Mint. And this was the exalted creed of Mr. Focion, until a full week after his admission to the House of Commons. We know not whether such a happy change comes upon all young members, but certainly, Mr. Focion talked less, and at least appeared more thoughtful. And this serious mood took a deeper shadow from a sermon, which the senator accidentally heard, on the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. Mrs. Focion remarked it, and ventured to observe, that nowhere could we get such true consolation as at church. Mr. Focion looked pale and severely calm as the bust of Brutus—but replied not.

It was an evening on which there was "no house," and Mr. and Mrs. Focion sat with the only thing that ought ever to divide man and wife—namely, a book, between them. The book was *Malthus on Population.* Our statesman had no children; and Mrs. Focion, who had merely looked at the title-page of the volume, contemplated her husband at his new studies with singular complacency. She would look meekly at her mate, and, in the pride of her heart, feel certain that some public or private good must come of such hard reading. Mr. Focion put aside the book, and leaned his head on his hand.

"'Tis now two months since you've taken your seat, my dear; pray when do you think you'll get anything?"

"Get anything?" responded Mr. Focion; "what should I get, but the proud satisfaction of—of—I desire, madam, that you

never again allude to so base a sentiment. Get anything! I should despise myself could I be induced to take office."

"Well, but a salary," observed Mrs. Focion—"or—a something that"—Mr. Focion frowned very darkly, and his wife was silent. Weeks went on, and Mr. Focion gradually lost that serenity of temper, which, up to his return to Parliament, had made his house a dove-cot. Mrs. Focion, in the simplicity of her soul, thought that law-making could not be so very respectable an employment, if it kept husbands out until four and five in the morning; and then sent them home more like ogres than rational, considerate helpmates. To do Mr. Focion justice, no member was more regular in his attendance, more sedulous in his indirect attentions to the minister, more watchful of the public money. Still, it was but too evident that the dearest wish of his heart was unsatisfied. His merits and his zeal were alike undiscerned. He had, it is true, a vote in the house, but for what it brought him, he might as well have had a voice in the Great Pyramid. Again and again, Mrs. Focion touched upon the probability of fallen manna; and again and again Mr. Focion, with grimmer looks and more passionate voice, declared that he should feel himself a wretch for ever could he be won to accept anything. "No! to him, place was little better than the pillory. He would maintain his independence—he would return to his constituents with white hands."

Mrs. Focion marvelled at the obstinacy of the man; and one morning, after a late debate, resolved to speak out. "What! was he mad enough to refuse a salary, for—if it pleased Providence—doing nothing? Was he"——

"Mrs. Focion, I have seen too many sad examples of political tergiversation, to add to the black number. I have seen the patriot of to-day, the pensioner of to-morrow." Mrs. Focion seemed to smile approval of the promotion. "But no; be it my glory to prove that there is still some public virtue left. And know, if I hold off from golden temptation—if I refuse, with inexpressible scorn, to sell myself to the minister—it is for this proud reason, that I have had"——

"*No bidders!*"

"Good God! who's that?" cried the patriot, turning pale as though called by the accusing angel.

"*No bidders! no bidders! no bidders!*" replied the parrot from its auction vocabulary.

Mr. Focion stared and gasped at the bird, as if a demon spoke in it—a malignant spirit that had possessed itself of the heart of the stateman's mystery—of the secret that had lain like an ulcer in his heart, tormenting him with scheming days

and anxious nights. There was something awful—appalling—supernatural in the words; or rather, there was a terrible humanity in them, that, as the patriot glared upon the bird, suggested to him the probability of a metempsychosis. "Had a Sir Robert Walpole been transmigrated into a parrot?"

"In the name of heaven! Mrs. Focion," said her husband, taking breath from his astonishment, "where did you get that plague?"

"*No bidders!*" said the irritating parrot. Unhappily, there lay upon the table a copy of the report of the Law Commission. It will give the reader a very favourable idea of Mr. Focion's strength, when we state that he seized the tome with one hand, and flung it at the speaker. The corner of the book caught the right eye of the bird, and extinguished its light. We ardently trust the only case of blindness effected by the "commission."

"Nay, I'm sure, my dear"—it was all in vain; Mrs. Focion, with all her eloquence, failed to convince the member of the many little amiable ways of her loquacious treasure; and well she might, for every morning after a long and heavy debate, Mr. Focion jaded, drowsy, bilious, was accosted by the parrot with a loud protracted chuckle, and "no bidders!"

In a very short time the parrot was thrust, with curses on its head, from the hearth of the senator.

Mr. Focion, we regret to say, in due season illustrated the instability of human genius; for he accepted a place, which he held until his speedy death; a fact commemorated on a tombstone in that extensive churchyard, Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER II.

Laurence Marvedi was a man of gold. His boyish practices and shifts had been those of a miser. He was now upwards of sixty, of an infirm constitution, but of immense worldly possessions. As he grew older, his passion for wealth absorbed every feeling, every sentiment, every hope, every fear, save one, the fear of death; and this dread he ever sought to escape from, by retreating to the contemplation of his hoards. He would almost persuade himself of the impossibility of death striking him amidst his treasures. Poor wretch! he had, through life, seen nothing beyond a guinea, and could not now look forward. He had had no sympathy with men; with his money-bags he had made a wall between his heart and them; and he shuddered,

and could hardly suppress a howl, as he thought of the common doom that would involve him, naked, shivering, stripped of his privilege, with his kind. It was this horror of the grave, that made him anxiously avoid the sight of all types of mortality; that made him forbid his niece and housekeeper to breathe a word of death. His apothecary, taking the cue, showed no more knowledge of death than if he had been to him the greatest stranger. Now and then, his niece, gathering her information from the newspaper, would speak of a Russian peasant —it must be the paternal softness of the government that induces people to live so long in Russia—who had just died at a hundred and ninety. On this, a slimy smile would streak the face of Marvedi, who, however, would soon relapse into melancholy, pathetically declaring that, "Russia was not England!"

"There!—that bell—there again—new churches! ugh!" cried the man of wealth, and he clasped his hands, and set his teeth, and his back was bowed like a hoop, and he rocked from side to side in his arm-chair, as the passing-bell told the tale of death. Mr. Marvedi had, for thirty years, dwelt in a house far removed from

———the sound of the church-going bell;

when it pleased the functionaries, vested with that solemn power, to build within a few furlongs of his residence a sacred temple. Marvedi rarely stirring from his house, was altogether ignorant of the goodly work, until the bell assured him it was done. The miser was immediately resolved; he would flee from the spot; he would bury himself where his ears should not receive the horrid warning. Some preparation was, however, necessary; and, in the mean time, he was tortured almost daily by the knell of death. He would sit and gasp in silence; and, with his bony hands, clutch the arms of the chair; and his eyes would wander round the room, as if watching something; and then he would try to smile, when the bell would seem to strike upon his heart, and he would shrink like a slave from the uplifted scourge. It was a frightful sight to see the old man thus, with his sinful soul bare in his face. He would sit, and, until the bell ceased, howl and mutter—"Another?—and rich they say,—with half a million, perhaps, and to die—Lord! Lord! to lose all—to be no longer prayed to—to enjoy no more law; but to be nailed up—thrust into a hole—and then the judgment!"—and here his locked hands would shake as with a palsy, and his speechless lips would move, and he would sit possessed by his conscience.

It was little more than an hour after one of these fits of

Marvedi, that Mr. Hopely, the doctor, made his morning-call. We must, however, premise, that his visits were ostensibly paid to Miss Fanny, the rich man's niece, Marvedi never consenting to believe that he himself was in want of medical advice, though every day he indirectly obtained it from his professional visitor. In this delusion he obstinately remained to the last; dying, in the end, with only the most delicate hint, on the part of Hopely, of his probable indisposition. When Marvedi was *in articulo mortis*, Hopely allowed that he might be a little poorly.

"Good-morning, Mr. Marvedi; good-morning, sir; ha! ha! never saw you looking better," said the courageous Mr. Hopely, staring in the slate-coloured face of the miser, and then pursing his mouth and raising his eyebrows, as he caught the eye of Fanny.

"Do you think so, Mr. Hopely? Do you really think so?" cried Marvedi whiningly, wishing to be cheated.

"Think so! why, you're like an oak, Mr. Marvedi: a handful of winters is nothing to you. And your pulse"—Marvedi was about to twitch his wrist from the hand of the lecturer—"delightful!" Marvedi held his wrist still; "so regular—so sound—the music of robust health. I have no doubt, at your age, Nestor had exactly the same pulse."

"Who was he?" asked the unlettered Plutus.

"Who? oh, an extraordinary man—lived a long time ago—but didn't die till he was six hundred," said Hopely, at a venture.

"Ha! the world has sadly changed, Mr. Hopely. Life was something in the time of Methusaleh," sighed Marvedi.

"The truth is, Mr. Marvedi, men insist upon killing themselves; otherwise, and I am religiously persuaded of the fact, any man, beginning with a fine constitution—a constitution like your own, for instance"—Marvedi cleared his throat, and tried to straighten his back—"might live to a thousand. All depends upon a wise temperance."

"I was never a glutton," interrupted Marvedi, folding his hands upon his breast.

"A wise temperance and a skilful doctor; not, understand me, to debilitate with drugs, but to sweeten the juices—to comfort with cordials. By the way, I have given the Arabian elixir to Fanny—three times a day, as before. There is nothing like temperance for long life. Look at Thomas Parr; bless me! it's very odd—I never remarked it before—you bear a great resemblance to the picture of Parr."

"What! old Parr?" asked Marvedi, with a grim smile.

"The same; the man who lived to upwards of a hundred and

fifty-two. Let me consider; yes, he saw out ten kings and queens."

"I have seen out three," said Marvedi.

"Then you have seven more to come," said the precise and encouraging apothecary. "Very singular! that I should not remark it before. Yes; the general expression of the head—the ample forehead—and the great power indicated in the jaw. I have no doubt, were a comparison possible, that you and he would be found"——

"What have you there, Fanny?" suddenly asked the counterpart of Thomas Parr.

"Oh! a present from Mr. Hopely," said the niece, fondling a parrot, which, we may as well inform the reader, was the bird of ill omen, banished, for its untimely truths, from the house of the law-maker. Mr. Hopely purchased it of a Jew, with whom Mrs. Focion had exchanged it for a figure in Nankin china.

"Parrots!" exclaimed Marvedi, leering discontent.

"Oh! a charming bird, uncle: sings all sorts of lively tunes" —such ran the warranty of the Jew—"and whistles 'Life let us cherish' like a Christian." The cheerfulness of the parrot's taste was not lost upon the man of wealth, who tacitly admitted the bird to his hospitality.

"It's not a squalling, shrieking, noisy wretch, with nothing to say for itself; but, as I am assured, a bird of capital education. You'll find it quite a companion to you; and as it is very young, and parrots live to a great age, I'm sure," and here Mr. Hopely took his hat, and shook Marvedi's hand; "I'm sure, you'll—extraordinary pulse—admirable pulse—you'll be fast friends for the next fifty years." Saying which, Mr. Hopely and Fanny quitted the room, to enjoy a conversation in which, doubtless, the health of Mr. Marvedi formed the principal subject.

Days passed on, and not a word was spoken, not a note whistled by the parrot—like a prudent alderman, it filled its belly without saying anything. It was a cold, blustering night in December, when Mr. Marvedi sat in his room—a room not to be approached by the profane of his household under the heaviest penalty. The apartment was almost filled with chests, bronzes, and pictures. There was an antique cabinet, studded and clasped with finely wrought brass, containing a vast treasure in *virtu* and jewels. From this Marvedi had taken several cases of diamonds, and now sat, gloating over their light, made more piercingly brilliant by the gloom of the muckthrift's den. He sat and passed his fingers over the gems, and, as if communing with sensible objects, in the imbecility of his soul chuckled and

prattled to them. "What! leave you! no—no—no! never—never! my darlings! my pretty ones!" and the miser pressed the diamonds to his blue lips. "Ha! ha! let kings keep their fighting-men. Are not these the best of guards, the surest defenders, which no treason can corrupt, no rebellion debase; which, banished from one land, lose nothing by their exile? Ha! ha!" and Marvedi clapt his hands at the jewels and the heaps of gold before him; "these, these are the old man's valiant body-guard, his truest soldiers! I feel stronger as I look at 'em. Hopely was right; I have many, many years to come; tut! I am but sixty-five; many, many years"——

"*Going!*" rang a high, passionless voice through the room.

"Ha!" cried the man of gold; and his fingers, like the claws of a vulture, instinctively pounced upon the jewels.

"*Going at sixty-five!*" was uttered, in the same high, measured tones.

"Marvedi could not speak. He lay with his breast on the table, and his arm stretched around his treasure. Years seemed to fall upon him in moments; his whole frame was shrunk together, and his heart beat as it would beat through. As he lay thus, sprawling and fixed with horror, his eyes burned and dilated like the eyes of a maimed tiger, and his rigid mouth gaped as with the last breath. In truth, there was something in the voice and words of the unseen speaker to make the boldest start. Marvedi lay and listened for the voice, though ready to yield up the ghost, should it speak again. How long he really listened, he knew not; though but a few minutes, it seemed to him a long, long night of horror. The place, gloomy before, to his imagination became darker and darker, and fantastic shadows seemed to creep about the wall. The arms of his chair appeared to grow close to his sides, and he sat fixed as in a trap. All was silent. Marvedi, casting his eyes around, ventured to move a hand—then, hardly breathing, lifted his head—drew up a leg—and thus, by fearful degrees, again gathered himself upright in his chair, and dared to move his head from side to side. He saw nothing; listened with new courage: heard nothing. He wiped the sweat from his forehead, and uttered a deep groan.

The next morning Mr. Marvedi, with him an unusual occurrence, took his breakfast in bed. Nay, he had not risen, when Hopely called to see Fanny. "Excuse me, but couldn't leave the house without saying good-morning," said the daily comforter, as he put aside the curtain. "Ha! humph!—I'm glad to see you looking so well," added Hopely, with unconscious hesitation.

"Well!" cried Marvedi; "do you really think I look well, Mr. Hopely?"—There was death in every line of his face.

"A little, little paler; but, perhaps you hav'n't had so much sleep to-night?"

"Not a wink—not a wink!" rattled from the throat of the man of money.

"Ha! that accounts for it. Yes—yes; well, a nap after dinner and"— and here Hopely looked at Fanny.

"You mean well, Mr. Hopely—but oh, Lord!—oh, Lord!—last night, oh, I fear I'm—yes—I'm certainly"——

"*Going!*" cried the warning voice of the previous night.

"There—there—there—again—again!"—shrieked Marvedi, and the bed shook beneath him.

"*For the last time, Going!*" cried the parrot, perched on the tester of the bed; for the bird being extremely tame, had the free run of the house, which may account for its having, the night before, hopped unseen into the sanctum of the miser.

Marvedi raved "Don't you hear it? I'm called—a spirit calls me!"

"Compose yourself, my dear sir,—pray compose yourself—why, ha! ha!—it's only Fanny's parrot," said Hopely, in the softest tones.

Life seemed to return again to the features of the sick man the mystery of the previous warning being so clearly made out, "Oh! ha! the bird you gave to Fanny—the parrot, to be my companion—thank you, Mr. Hopely—thank you," said Marvedi, with a grim, malicious smile. "But away with it—kill it—wring its neck—out of doors with it!"

"To be sure, sir—to be sure," said Hopely, in vain attempting to secure the parrot, that flew from place to place, exclaiming, and always in a shriller tone—"*Going—going at sixty-five—ha! ha!—decidedly going—going—going!*" whilst Marvedi roared and raved for the death or expulsion of the truth-teller. At length Hopely, irritated by the successful movements of the bird, and urged by the cries of the sick man, flung his walking-cane at the parrot, and brought it to the floor; though, we are pained to say, with a broken leg. The martyr to truth was again banished for its folly.

It was the midnight of the third day after the above-named occurrence, and Hopely, Fanny, and the housekeeper stood about the bed of Laurence Marvedi. His doom was fixed; despite the flatteries of the apothecary, death stood sentinel at the sick man's door. "I—think I'm getting ill," said the dying man.

THE PREACHER PARROT.

CHAPTER I.

"TRUTH," says John Milton, is "rarely born, but, like a bastard, to the shame of him who begets it." Let not the veracious reader start at this dreary faith; for the same author goes on to declare, that time at length legitimatises the base-born, and removes the odium from its father. Thus, though the living martyr may be burned to cinders, it may so happen that the greatest veneration shall be paid to his ashes. Now—as we are given to understand from gentlemen of the learned profession, members of parliament, party politicians, and other consumers of the precious manna—though truth be an inestimable treasure, still for that reason it is not to be produced on every light occasion. In the first place, a too great familiarity with it begets indifference. To be always speaking the truth, what is it but to wear a court-suit every day—to go shopping in hoop, stomacher, and diamonds? It was a most wise apophthegm, that of a late attorney, whose only son—how he acquired the antipathy yet remains a mystery—had an invincible aversion to a lie. "Joseph," said the father, with something like tears in his eyes, "Joseph, Heaven knows how soon I may be taken from you, and therefore I cannot too frequently check your preposterous extravagance. Truth, Joseph, truth is like gold; a really wise man makes a little of it go a great way." To our mind, nothing can be finer, nothing more profound than this axiom. Truth *is* like gold; for how often does a reckless use of it bring its utterer to beggary! Let the fate of our hero be taken as an example.

"One pound one—the bird is yours, sir, cage and all." Thus spoke Mr. Green, the auctioneer, declaring a parrot, one of a dozen that had been twenty times put up without a purchaser, to be the property of the guinea-bidder. The owner of the bird

knew not the dangerous treasure he possessed. The parrot was a very Solomon in feathers; and, though its possessor failed to appreciate the virtue, like true wisdom, it was sparing of speech. Its master, mistaking silence for inability, disposed of the bird as a blockhead, though, if it liked, it could, fifty times a day have called itself a clever fellow. However, there was this besetting sin in the bird,—it never opened its mouth, but it uttered an awkward truth, blurted out a sentence turned with satire, reproach, or contempt. What it said would, at times, fall with a fatal crash upon the cogitations of its hearers, making them doubt if Beelzebub spoke not through a parrot. Unfortunately for its future quiet, its long sojourn in the room of the auctioneer had enabled it to store its memory with the choicest scraps of the orator; which undigested exclamations, interrogatories, opinions, and appeals, it would too frequently utter to the confusion of its owners.

Our martyr to truth—the parrot—became the property of the lady of Mr. Focion, a gentleman who had struggled through many difficulties to become a member of Parliament, some of his difficulties being considerably lessened by the attainment of the dignity: yes; he was a senator, to the confusion of his tailor. He was a man of considerable powers of address, being heard at any part of Copenhagen-fields, whenever he there condescended to deliver his sentiments. As his opinions were not fixed, he was in the happiest condition for improvement. If he had not read a great deal of history, he had attended and spoken at many public dinners. If he had cared to shine that way, he could have argued in the style of Fox or Burke; but the days were gone for rhetorical speeches: no, the spirit of the times demanded brevity, and it was much easier to call names. Indeed, Mr. Focion successfully exercised that great art of life—the art of gracefully concealing our ignorance. He was a man with a face of undaunted metal, and with nerves of equally strong, if not of the same material. Sublimely unconscious of the ridiculous, he soared above his own deficiencies, and was never so elevated as when utterly incomprehensible. Though not quite sufficiently skilled in the graces of literature to become a professor of poetry, he never made a speech without the support of the muse. No, never did he speak of the "poor man," but the oration was decked with that fringe of untarnished gold—

> Princes and lords may flourish and may fade,
> A breath can make them as a breath has made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

attempts to catch it, for its leg, though weak, had been set by some Samaritan, the bird was suffered to remain.

"It was downright cruelty to ask, but would,"—thus spoke the banker's younger son,—"would Miss Limetwig sing his favourite song—the "——

"Certainly," answered Mrs. Limetwig for her daughter; and the favourite song—we forget its title and words, but its being very popular may account for that—was executed with incomparable power.

"Your only unmarried daughter?" observed the banker's son, in a low voice, to Mrs. Limetwig.

"All married, except my dear Belinda; and it would break my heart, I believe, to part with her. Yes, sir," said the mother, affected even by the probability of a separation, "Belinda, sir, is—is "——

"*The last lot, gentlemen,—the last lot!*" cried the parrot; and the guests burst into uncontrolled laughter. Belinda, with fine presence of mind, immediately struck the keys of the piano, as though quite unconscious of the interruption, and in a minute or two was in the midst of a furious battle-piece.

"If I might aspire to the notice of Miss Limetwig," said the banker's son to the mother, "I hope that "——

"*Going for a song, gentlemen!*" cried the parrot; and again its words were greeted with a shout. "It was too much; the creature—where could it have learned such words?—should be sent from the house." Such was the sentence pronounced by Mrs. Limetwig, and after some little difficulty, carried into execution. But the charm of the night was broken: Mrs. Limetwig was irritated, Belinda languid, and the banker's son—whether the last declaration of the bird "had given him pause," we know not—not once, for the remainder of the evening, ventured to speak of Belinda. She died a maid, a victim to the intrusion of truth.

What would become of the world, if truth interfered in every marriage?

CHAPTER IV.

THE parrot was now doomed to feel, in disgrace and poverty, the imprudence of the past. It had suffered for too much truth. Untoward accidents had placed it in situations where its foible told with fatal effect on the sensibility of its patrons. It was now, however, housed where truth might be spoken; at least, so it will be thought, when we make known the next lodging of our martyr. In smoky, squalid huts, surely truth may show its nakedness, and utter its rough but wholesome sayings.

Jerry Noggin was kept a cobbler by the bottle: could he have withstood its witcheries, he might, whenever he pleased, have asserted the full dignity of shoemaker; yes, he might have made, where he mended; he might have been the author of boots, instead of the ignoble translator. For twenty years had his wife rated him for his prostituted genius, for suffering "any vamper to get above his head," when, if he liked, he might have made shoes for the king. Jerry, in his serious moments—that is when he had no money,—allowed the justice of the reproach, and as constantly promised no longer to deserve it.

"Ha! Lord help me! I was well put to it to marry you!" exclaimed Mrs. Noggin, in the course of one of those little disputes, that give a zest and flavour to matrimony.

"To be sure you were," said Jerry, and his words smacked of the bar at the corner; "to be sure; all the parish knew that."

"What! I might have married a gentleman," retorted Mrs. Noggin.

"And so you have," said Jerry, with a smug look of dignity.

"A gentleman! A fellow that does nothing but sot upon gin and"——

"That's not my fault, but my misfortune," cried Noggin, somewhat affected. "Don't reproach me, Nelly, if—if"—— and the maudlin cobbler began to weep, "if I can't get brandy! Don't talk to me; what matter how a man gets at happiness, so he does but have it?"

"Happiness! and have you the impudence to call yourself happy?" exclaimed the wife; and, considering that she was his wife, his avowal of felicity betokened great moral courage.

Noggin evidently felt the absurdity of the bravado; for, looking up in his wife's face, and puffing out his cheeks, like the cheeks of an ape, he hiccuped—"sometimes, in the skittle-ground."

"And there you find happiness?" cried Mrs. Noggin, with supreme contempt.

"Yes," said Jerry, qualifying his assertion, "when you've the rheumatiz."

"And I have wasted the bloom of my youth"——

"Bloom! tan," said Jerry, "tan."

"How many women would have left you, you villain?" shouted Mrs. Noggin, stung by the sneer at her beauty.

"Ha! I've often thought that," said Jerry, "if I had but known how to go to work."

"What! you want to get rid of me?" and the shame-stricken husband did not venture to deny the enormity. "Of me? who could have picked and chosen where I liked! of me"——

"Now, I say, Nell, let's have no more of this. Pick and choose! I say nothing; you're my wife, and I hope God will forgive me; but you know, Nell, as for picking and choosing," and here Mr. Noggin, with the end of his thumb placed at the end of his nose, indicated some deep, mystic meaning.

Mrs. Noggin, enraged at the gesture, screamed in treble, "Why, you pitiful, dirty villain! you miserable rascal, that I have kept from being naked; you ungrateful fellow, that I nursed with a broken arm"—Mrs. Noggin did not pause to say how it had been broken—"do you dare to mean to say that I couldn't have married the miller—and the"——

"Why, Nell, you know it,"—and Noggin could sometimes be stern in his liquor; "you know that when I married you, you know that you were going a-begging!"

"Going a-begging!" roared Mrs. Noggin, placing her hands at her sides.

"Yes—going a-begging; you were"——

"*Cheap as dirt!*" cried the parrot, from the top of a wicker cage, the residence of a late magpie; "*cheap as dirt!*" repeated the bird.

Mrs. Noggin was for an instant struck dumb by the untimely truth of such a speaker. Jerry recovering his astonishment, slapped his thigh, shouted a laugh, and said, "that's a bit of truth."

"*Cheap as dirt—cheap as dirt—cheap as dirt!*" iterated the parrot, as though proud of the praise of the husband.

"And it isn't enough that you, a villain and a coward as you are, wear out my life, but you must teach a parrot to"——

"*Cheap as dirt!*" cried the bird. It spoke no more; for Mrs. Noggin, seizing a last, with amazing force and dexterity flung it at the speaker, and the parrot fell dead upon the floor.

Even in the garret of a cobbler there was no retreat for truth.

Silly, silly bird! had it lived a life of self-glorification, how differently had its life been passed. "I cannot think," said the parrot, one day, to a fine macaw in a gold burnished cage, "I cannot think," said our sufferer, the spirit of Æsop for a brief minute descending on the birds, "how it is that I meet with nothing but persecution and misfortune. I talk whole sentences, and might reasonably expect great admiration for my sagacity; and yet look at me; see, what a poor, plucked, maimed vagrant I am! How is it, my dear macaw, that you have for so many years enjoyed uninterrupted luxury? Surely you must have an extraordinary gift of words. Tell me, how is this? are you continually letting fall rich truths—for ever dealing in deep wisdom?"

"Not I," said the macaw; "I have lived here these ten years, and have been pampered on the best; and yet, until this hour, I have never said anything from morn till night, except '*pretty Poll!*

CHAPTER V.

THIS will be a very short chapter; but to the admirers of martyred worth, we trust a very grateful one. Lord Shaftesbury assures us, that no man of genius starves unknown; his starvation, probably, helping to make him notorious. Even truth has, at last, its enduring reward.

Lady —— had the most splendid collection of all that was "rich and rare." Happy were they admitted to the wonders of her museum! "And pray, what have we here?" asked a foreign Countess, pausing before our stuffed parrot—a parrot, with its every feather composed, its eye replaced, set up in an erect and self-asserting posture, standing beneath a dome of glass, and supported by a pillar of most exquisite marble, whereon were inscribed, in letters of gold, the history, acts, and death of our martyr.

The parrot had, in its life, been blinded, maimed; had been hunted from place to place with hate and curses following it, and had at last been brained by a shrew for the truth in a cobbler's garret. But dead, its fame began to live; and now, it stands in a palace upon marble, and is sheltered from the smallest mote by a case of crystal!

What are the trials of truth, when we think of its monuments?

Marvedi, that Mr. Hopely, the doctor, made his morning-call. We must, however, premise, that his visits were ostensibly paid to Miss Fanny, the rich man's niece, Marvedi never consenting to believe that he himself was in want of medical advice, though every day he indirectly obtained it from his professional visitor. In this delusion he obstinately remained to the last; dying, in the end, with only the most delicate hint, on the part of Hopely, of his probable indisposition. When Marvedi was *in articulo mortis*, Hopely allowed that he might be a little poorly.

"Good-morning, Mr. Marvedi; good-morning, sir; ha! ha! never saw you looking better," said the courageous Mr. Hopely, staring in the slate-coloured face of the miser, and then pursing his mouth and raising his eyebrows, as he caught the eye of Fanny.

"Do you think so, Mr. Hopely? Do you really think so?" cried Marvedi whiningly, wishing to be cheated.

"Think so! why, you're like an oak, Mr. Marvedi: a handful of winters is nothing to you. And your pulse"—Marvedi was about to twitch his wrist from the hand of the lecturer—"delightful!" Marvedi held his wrist still; "so regular—so sound—the music of robust health. I have no doubt, at your age, Nestor had exactly the same pulse."

"Who was he?" asked the unlettered Plutus.

"Who? oh, an extraordinary man—lived a long time ago—but didn't die till he was six hundred," said Hopely, at a venture.

"Ha! the world has sadly changed, Mr. Hopely. Life was something in the time of Methusaleh," sighed Marvedi.

"The truth is, Mr. Marvedi, men insist upon killing themselves; otherwise, and I am religiously persuaded of the fact, any man, beginning with a fine constitution—a constitution like your own, for instance"—Marvedi cleared his throat, and tried to straighten his back—"might live to a thousand. All depends upon a wise temperance."

"I was never a glutton," interrupted Marvedi, folding his hands upon his breast.

"A wise temperance and a skilful doctor; not, understand me, to debilitate with drugs, but to sweeten the juices—to comfort with cordials. By the way, I have given the Arabian elixir to Fanny—three times a day, as before. There is nothing like temperance for long life. Look at Thomas Parr; bless me! it's very odd—I never remarked it before—you bear a great resemblance to the picture of Parr."

"What! old Parr?" asked Marvedi, with a grim smile.

"The same; the man who lived to upwards of a hundred and

fifty-two. Let me consider; yes, he saw out ten kings and queens."

"I have seen out three," said Marvedi.

"Then you have seven more to come," said the precise and encouraging apothecary. "Very singular! that I should not remark it before. Yes; the general expression of the head—the ample forehead—and the great power indicated in the jaw. I have no doubt, were a comparison possible, that you and he would be found"——

"What have you there, Fanny?" suddenly asked the counterpart of Thomas Parr.

"Oh! a present from Mr. Hopely," said the niece, fondling a parrot, which, we may as well inform the reader, was the bird of ill omen, banished, for its untimely truths, from the house of the law-maker. Mr. Hopely purchased it of a Jew, with whom Mrs. Focion had exchanged it for a figure in Nankin china.

"Parrots!" exclaimed Marvedi, leering discontent.

"Oh! a charming bird, uncle: sings all sorts of lively tunes"—such ran the warranty of the Jew—"and whistles 'Life let us cherish' like a Christian." The cheerfulness of the parrot's taste was not lost upon the man of wealth, who tacitly admitted the bird to his hospitality.

"It's not a squalling, shrieking, noisy wretch, with nothing to say for itself; but, as I am assured, a bird of capital education. You'll find it quite a companion to you; and as it is very young, and parrots live to a great age, I'm sure," and here Mr. Hopely took his hat, and shook Marvedi's hand; "I'm sure, you'll—extraordinary pulse—admirable pulse—you'll be fast friends for the next fifty years." Saying which, Mr. Hopely and Fanny quitted the room, to enjoy a conversation in which, doubtless, the health of Mr. Marvedi formed the principal subject.

Days passed on, and not a word was spoken, not a note whistled by the parrot—like a prudent alderman, it filled its belly without saying anything. It was a cold, blustering night in December, when Mr. Marvedi sat in his room—a room not to be approached by the profane of his household under the heaviest penalty. The apartment was almost filled with chests, bronzes, and pictures. There was an antique cabinet, studded and clasped with finely wrought brass, containing a vast treasure in *virtu* and jewels. From this Marvedi had taken several cases of diamonds, and now sat, gloating over their light, made more piercingly brilliant by the gloom of the muckthrift's den. He sat and passed his fingers over the gems, and, as if communing with sensible objects, in the imbecility of his soul chuckled and

prattled to them. "What! leave you! no—no—no! never—never! my darlings! my pretty ones!" and the miser pressed the diamonds to his blue lips. "Ha! ha! let kings keep their fighting-men. Are not these the best of guards, the surest defenders, which no treason can corrupt, no rebellion debase; which, banished from one land, lose nothing by their exile? Ha! ha!" and Marvedi clapt his hands at the jewels and the heaps of gold before him; "these, these are the old man's valiant body-guard, his truest soldiers! I feel stronger as I look at 'em. Hopely was right; I have many, many years to come; tut! I am but sixty-five; many, many years"——

"*Going!*" rang a high, passionless voice through the room.

"Ha!" cried the man of gold; and his fingers, like the claws of a vulture, instinctively pounced upon the jewels.

"*Going at sixty-five!*" was uttered, in the same high, measured tones.

"Marvedi could not speak. He lay with his breast on the table, and his arm stretched around his treasure. Years seemed to fall upon him in moments; his whole frame was shrunk together, and his heart beat as it would beat through. As he lay thus, sprawling and fixed with horror, his eyes burned and dilated like the eyes of a maimed tiger, and his rigid mouth gaped as with the last breath. In truth, there was something in the voice and words of the unseen speaker to make the boldest start. Marvedi lay and listened for the voice, though ready to yield up the ghost, should it speak again. How long he really listened, he knew not; though but a few minutes, it seemed to him a long, long night of horror. The place, gloomy before, to his imagination became darker and darker, and fantastic shadows seemed to creep about the wall. The arms of his chair appeared to grow close to his sides, and he sat fixed as in a trap. All was silent. Marvedi, casting his eyes around, ventured to move a hand—then, hardly breathing, lifted his head—drew up a leg—and thus, by fearful degrees, again gathered himself upright in his chair, and dared to move his head from side to side. He saw nothing; listened with new courage: heard nothing. He wiped the sweat from his forehead, and uttered a deep groan.

The next morning Mr. Marvedi, with him an unusual occurrence, took his breakfast in bed. Nay, he had not risen, when Hopely called to see Fanny. "Excuse me, but couldn't leave the house without saying good-morning," said the daily comforter, as he put aside the curtain. "Ha! humph!—I'm glad to see you looking so well," added Hopely, with unconscious hesitation.

"Well!" cried Marvedi; "do you really think I look well, Mr. Hopely?"—There was death in every line of his face.

"A little, little paler; but, perhaps you hav'n't had so much sleep to-night?"

"Not a wink—not a wink!" rattled from the throat of the man of money.

"Ha! that accounts for it. Yes—yes; well, a nap after dinner and"— and here Hopely looked at Fanny.

"You mean well, Mr. Hopely—but oh, Lord!—oh, Lord!—last night, oh, I fear I'm—yes—I'm certainly"——

"*Going!*" cried the warning voice of the previous night.

"There—there—there—again—again!"—shrieked Marvedi, and the bed shook beneath him.

"*For the last time, Going!*" cried the parrot, perched on the tester of the bed; for the bird being extremely tame, had the free run of the house, which may account for its having, the night before, hopped unseen into the sanctum of the miser.

Marvedi raved "Don't you hear it? I'm called—a spirit calls me!"

"Compose yourself, my dear sir,—pray compose yourself—why, ha! ha!—it's only Fanny's parrot," said Hopely, in the softest tones.

Life seemed to return again to the features of the sick man the mystery of the previous warning being so clearly made out, "Oh! ha! the bird you gave to Fanny—the parrot, to be my companion—thank you, Mr. Hopely—thank you," said Marvedi, with a grim, malicious smile. "But away with it—kill it—wring its neck—out of doors with it!"

"To be sure, sir—to be sure," said Hopely, in vain attempting to secure the parrot, that flew from place to place, exclaiming, and always in a shriller tone—"*Going—going at sixty-five—ha! ha!—decidedly going—going—going!*" whilst Marvedi roared and raved for the death or expulsion of the truth-teller. At length Hopely, irritated by the successful movements of the bird, and urged by the cries of the sick man, flung his walking-cane at the parrot, and brought it to the floor; though, we are pained to say, with a broken leg. The martyr to truth was again banished for its folly.

It was the midnight of the third day after the above-named occurrence, and Hopely, Fanny, and the housekeeper stood about the bed of Laurence Marvedi. His doom was fixed; despite the flatteries of the apothecary, death stood sentinel at the sick man's door. "I—think I'm getting ill," said the dying man.

"Possibly—possibly, you may think so; but you're going on admirably," pronounced the equivocating Hopely.

"I should like to turn upon this side," said the patient, feebly.

"There, sir—there,"—said Hopely, who, with the housekeeper, assisted the sick man. "There—now, I'm sure you'll be better."

He *was* better—he was dead.

The apothecary found himself down in the will of the miser for a handsome legacy. Our truth-teller had a broken leg.

CHAPTER III.

A very select party was congregated at the house of Mrs. Limetwig, to celebrate the birth-day of her daughter, the youngest of four, the fair Belinda; who, at the time we write, had entered into her nineteenth year, and although she had no fortune—at least, what is vulgarly understood by the mercenary young men of our day as fortune—she had the nobler kind of wealth in great abundance—she was accomplished to the verge of perfection. Her pine-apples, painted on white satin, were equal, if not superior, to any in Covent-garden. And then her portraits of dear and particular friends, they lived and looked! It was only known to a few, but she had contributed some of the fancy heads, to either the Bloomsbury or the Bagnigge Wells Beauties, we forget which. Her modesty withheld her name, but they who had seen one of her faces could easily point out the whole gallery. They had all the same sweet small mouth; in which the artist finely indicated the ethereal nature of the heroine, showing that with such a mouth it was impossible to eat. A mouth—if we may dare even to approach a masculine simile—almost the size of a shirt button-hole; indeed, when any of the teeth were seen, it might almost be doubted if they were not the pearl button itself. And then the Dian-like purity illustrated in such little lips! they might, with difficulty, compass a whistle, but could never be brought to perpetrate a kiss. The eyes were worthy of the lips—nice little beads, looking up in one head and down in another, as, in obedience to a wire, we see the different orbs of different dolls. And then the flesh and the general expression of the face—so soft, so very sweet, so unlike the flesh that, on this dull earth, is wooed and won and taken before a parson: no, it is clear such beauties live upon honey-dew like humming-birds; on conserves of roses, and jessamine

paste. They are a great improvement on the ideal woman of Wordsworth, and are

——*much* too good
For human nature's daily food.

It may be thought that we have lingered too long on the one ability of Belinda, seeing that she has so many; but we could not for the life of us let the reader pass in ignorance of the fair hand so successfully helping the advancement of high British art. We have paused—many a time have we paused—before these heads, contemplating them with the same profound sense of the beautiful, that in our schoolboy days we have lavished upon sugar-plums; nay, it may be wrong to own the weakness, but, perhaps, with the self-same wish. To return to the birth-day party.

We never see a young lady, surrounded by eight or ten bachelors, take off her gloves, and seat herself at the piano, but we shudder, from an association of ideas;—yes, we instantly think of the infernal machine. Who knows how many men may be killed dead on the spot by the first crash! Belinda played divinely. Edgar Flimsy, the younger son of a country banker, looked very serious as the music proceeded. Mrs. Limetwig observed the gravity of the young gentleman, and, doubtless to divert it, desired Belinda to sing. Belinda obeyed, and sang in the finest possible taste. Had she been wound up for the occasion, like a musical snuff-box, she could not have acquitted herself with more precision, and with less vulgar impulse: every note fell from her lips as if it were chiselled; and then her execution! Poor Edgar Flimsy!—his heart was dragged up and down the gamut until exhausted, when, at the last three-minute shake of the songstress, it fell into a thousand little pieces. Indeed, we would not own the heart that could stand that shake. There was a general burst of applause, followed for a moment by a profound silence. Mrs. Limetwig looked proudly at the young bachelors, but favoured the younger son of the banker with a look entirely for himself.

In this pause, a voice cried out, and it seemed as if accompanying the glances of Mrs. Limetwig—"*Does nobody offer?*"

A titter, deepening into a laugh, went round the room, and Mrs. Limetwig and Belinda turned to scarlet. "Oh—ha! ha!" observed the mamma, evidently restraining excessive laughter, "that teazing bird, which William's godfather brought him—how came it here?" and the servant was immediately ordered to secure the intruder: but the parrot was a social parrot, and resolved not to leave the party; hence, after many ineffectual

attempts to catch it, for its leg, though weak, had been set by some Samaritan, the bird was suffered to remain.

"It was downright cruelty to ask, but would,"—thus spoke the banker's younger son,—"would Miss Limetwig sing his favourite song—the"——

"Certainly," answered Mrs. Limetwig for her daughter; and the favourite song—we forget its title and words, but its being very popular may account for that—was executed with incomparable power.

"Your only unmarried daughter?" observed the banker's son, in a low voice, to Mrs. Limetwig.

"All married, except my dear Belinda; and it would break my heart, I believe, to part with her. Yes, sir," said the mother, affected even by the probability of a separation, "Belinda, sir, is—is"——

"*The last lot, gentlemen,—the last lot!*" cried the parrot; and the guests burst into uncontrolled laughter. Belinda, with fine presence of mind, immediately struck the keys of the piano, as though quite unconscious of the interruption, and in a minute or two was in the midst of a furious battle-piece.

"If I might aspire to the notice of Miss Limetwig," said the banker's son to the mother, "I hope that"——

"*Going for a song, gentlemen!*" cried the parrot; and again its words were greeted with a shout. "It was too much; the creature—where could it have learned such words?—should be sent from the house." Such was the sentence pronounced by Mrs. Limetwig, and after some little difficulty, carried into execution. But the charm of the night was broken: Mrs. Limetwig was irritated, Belinda languid, and the banker's son—whether the last declaration of the bird "had given him pause," we know not—not once, for the remainder of the evening, ventured to speak of Belinda. She died a maid, a victim to the intrusion of truth.

What would become of the world, if truth interfered in every marriage?

CHAPTER IV.

The parrot was now doomed to feel, in disgrace and poverty, the imprudence of the past. It had suffered for too much truth. Untoward accidents had placed it in situations where its foible told with fatal effect on the sensibility of its patrons. It was now, however, housed where truth might be spoken; at least, so it will be thought, when we make known the next lodging of our martyr. In smoky, squalid huts, surely truth may show its nakedness, and utter its rough but wholesome sayings.

Jerry Noggin was kept a cobbler by the bottle: could he have withstood its witcheries, he might, whenever he pleased, have asserted the full dignity of shoemaker; yes, he might have made, where he mended; he might have been the author of boots, instead of the ignoble translator. For twenty years had his wife rated him for his prostituted genius, for suffering "any vamper to get above his head," when, if he liked, he might have made shoes for the king. Jerry, in his serious moments—that is when he had no money,—allowed the justice of the reproach, and as constantly promised no longer to deserve it.

"Ha! Lord help me! I was well put to it to marry you!" exclaimed Mrs. Noggin, in the course of one of those little disputes, that give a zest and flavour to matrimony.

"To be sure you were," said Jerry, and his words smacked of the bar at the corner; "to be sure; all the parish knew that."

"What! I might have married a gentleman," retorted Mrs. Noggin.

"And so you have," said Jerry, with a smug look of dignity.

"A gentleman! A fellow that does nothing but sot upon gin and"——

"That's not my fault, but my misfortune," cried Noggin, somewhat affected. "Don't reproach me, Nelly, if—if"—— and the maudlin cobbler began to weep, "if I can't get brandy! Don't talk to me; what matter how a man gets at happiness, so he does but have it?"

"Happiness! and have you the impudence to call yourself happy?" exclaimed the wife; and, considering that she was his wife, his avowal of felicity betokened great moral courage.

Noggin evidently felt the absurdity of the bravado; for, looking up in his wife's face, and puffing out his cheeks, like the cheeks of an ape, he hiccuped—"sometimes, in the skittle-ground."

"And there you find happiness?" cried Mrs. Noggin, with supreme contempt.

"Yes," said Jerry, qualifying his assertion, "when you've the rheumatiz."

"And I have wasted the bloom of my youth"——

"Bloom! tan," said Jerry, "tan."

"How many women would have left you, you villain?" shouted Mrs. Noggin, stung by the sneer at her beauty.

"Ha! I've often thought that," said Jerry, "if I had but known how to go to work."

"What! you want to get rid of me?" and the shame-stricken husband did not venture to deny the enormity. "Of me? who could have picked and chosen where I liked! of me"——

"Now, I say, Nell, let's have no more of this. Pick and choose! I say nothing; you're my wife, and I hope God will forgive me; but you know, Nell, as for picking and choosing," and here Mr. Noggin, with the end of his thumb placed at the end of his nose, indicated some deep, mystic meaning.

Mrs. Noggin, enraged at the gesture, screamed in treble, "Why, you pitiful, dirty villain! you miserable rascal, that I have kept from being naked; you ungrateful fellow, that I nursed with a broken arm"—Mrs. Noggin did not pause to say how it had been broken—"do you dare to mean to say that I couldn't have married the miller—and the"——

"Why, Nell, you know it,"—and Noggin could sometimes be stern in his liquor; "you know that when I married you, you know that you were going a-begging!"

"Going a-begging!" roared Mrs. Noggin, placing her hands at her sides.

"Yes—going a-begging; you were"——

"*Cheap as dirt!*" cried the parrot, from the top of a wicker cage, the residence of a late magpie; "*cheap as dirt!*" repeated the bird.

Mrs. Noggin was for an instant struck dumb by the untimely truth of such a speaker. Jerry recovering his astonishment, slapped his thigh, shouted a laugh, and said, "that's a bit of truth."

"*Cheap as dirt—cheap as dirt—cheap as dirt!*" iterated the parrot, as though proud of the praise of the husband.

"And it isn't enough that you, a villain and a coward as you are, wear out my life, but you must teach a parrot to"——

"*Cheap as dirt!*" cried the bird. It spoke no more; for Mrs. Noggin, seizing a last, with amazing force and dexterity flung it at the speaker, and the parrot fell dead upon the floor.

Even in the garret of a cobbler there was no retreat for truth.

Silly, silly bird! had it lived a life of self-glorification, how differently had its life been passed. "I cannot think," said the parrot, one day, to a fine macaw in a gold burnished cage, "I cannot think," said our sufferer, the spirit of Æsop for a brief minute descending on the birds, "how it is that I meet with nothing but persecution and misfortune. I talk whole sentences, and might reasonably expect great admiration for my sagacity; and yet look at me; see, what a poor, plucked, maimed vagrant I am! How is it, my dear macaw, that you have for so many years enjoyed uninterrupted luxury? Surely you must have an extraordinary gift of words. Tell me, how is this? are you continually letting fall rich truths—for ever dealing in deep wisdom?"

"Not I," said the macaw; "I have lived here these ten years, and have been pampered on the best; and yet, until this hour, I have never said anything from morn till night, except '*pretty Poll!*

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What are the trials of truth, when we think of its monuments?

THE LIVES OF

BROWN, JONES, AND ROBINSON.

"SMITH! BROWN! JONES! and ROBINSON!" We can see the eyes of the reader sparkle as they meet the names of his schoolboy friends. And now, they melt, and the reader lays his hand upon his pensive heart, sighing at the untimely fate of "Smith," who "was drowned." The reader mourns for the dead—for the red-cheeked, curly-headed little Smith, prodigal of apples when apples fell to his lot—cunning at taw—agile at leap-frog—knowing at kite: for Smith who, like many a Chancellor of the Exchequer, had surmounted multiplication only to sink; for Smith who, like many philosophers and metaphysicians, sounded the lowest depths of things only to leave the world in ignorance of his discoveries.

It was our first purpose to make no further allusion to the spelling-book tragedy than that already set down; in our simplicity we thought the mere names, Brown, Jones, and Robinson, would be all-sufficient to awaken a full recollection of their perils past—of the punishment they suffered—of the immortal reasons of the schoolmaster for the chastisement he weepingly bestowed.

"We will trust," said we to our prosaic friend Wagstaff—"we will trust to the recollections of the world," and we looked about us proudly.

"Dearest ——," said Wagstaff, "do no such thing. No—no; give your text. Give the whole story '*Of the Boys that went into the Water instead of being at School or at Home*,' and then, whatever you may have to say upon the matter—though I believe Mr. Daniel Fenning has said all that can be said—state briefly afterwards. But answer me,—— what can you purpose by your present whim?"

"Whim, Mr. Wagstaff? We feel that we are about to become

a great moral teacher. We have documents, yes, sir, documents containing the future lives of Brown, Jones, and Robinson, which will enable us to shew the paramount value and influence of early impressions. When at school, Mr. Wagstaff, were you ever whipped?"

"I never was at school, Mr. ——," and Wagstaff seemed to rise a good inch higher. "But what has whipping to do with early impressions?"

"You shall find, if you will patiently listen to the lives of Brown, Jones, and Robinson. But first I will set on the head of my story—where it will glitter like a coronet—a passage from Mr. Fenning. Mark the simple beauty of—

"LESSON I.—There were several boys that used to go into the water instead of being at school, and they sometimes staid so long after school time, that they used to frighten their parents very much; and though they were told of it time after time, yet they *would frequently go to wash themselves!* One day four of them, *Smith, Brown, Jones,* and *Robinson,* took it into their heads to play the truant, and go into the water. They had not been in long before *Smith* was drowned! *Brown's* father followed him, and lashed him heartily while he was naked; and *Jones* and *Robinson* ran home half-dressed, which plainly told where they had been. However, they were both sent to bed *without any supper,* and told very plainly that they should be well corrected at school next day!"

We pass the "second lesson," as it contains little worthy of thought, save the benevolent promise of the schoolmaster, who pledges himself to flog the delinquents; a pledge which he redeems in a spirit of punctuality more than satisfactory to the sufferers. We now come to "Lesson III.," which shews "*How Brown, Jones, and Robinson were served.*"

"Next day, *Brown, Jones,* and *Robinson* were sent to school, and in a short time were called up to their master; and he first began with *Brown.* —Pray, young gentleman, said he, what is the reason you go into the water without the consent of your parents, and even when you should be at school? I won't do so any more, said Brown. *That is nothing at all,* replied the master; *I cannot trust you.* Pray can you swim? No, sir. *Not swim, do you say?* Why, you might have been drowned as well as *Smith.* Take him up, said the master. So he was taken up, and well whipped.

"Well, said he to *Jones,* can you swim? A little, sir. A *little!* said the master; *why, you were in more danger than Brown,* and might have been drowned if you had ventured much farther. Take him up, said he.

"Now, Robinson could swim very well, and thought, as *Brown* and *Jones* were whipped because they could not swim, that he should escape. Well, *Robinson,* said the master, can you swim? Yes, sir, said he (very boldly), anywhere over the river. You can swim, you say? Yes, sir. Then pray, sir, if you can swim so well, what business had you in the

water, when you should have been at school? *You didn't want to learn to swim, you say?* it is plain then you go in for idleness' sake. Take him up, take him up, said he. So they were all *severely corrected* for their disobedience and folly!"

Brown, Jones, and Robinson were whipped, but Smith was beyond the vengeance of the schoolmaster. Smith might blandly smile at—

"The silvery stems of delicate birch-trees."

He was secure from the strong arm, and the stronger reason of the pedagogue. His future days were not like the days of his surviving companions, doomed to feel the influence of "early impressions." Little Smith was borne to the churchyard by boys and girls in comely white; flowers grew on his grave, and in due time a cherub head, considered to be a likeness of the deceased, wept never-falling tears—a touching type of his watery fate—above him. The mortal part of Smith was assuredly laid in dust; but, to this day, his ghost is said to be in many waters. "I'm sure," exclaimed a little fellow of six years old, gazing on a brook with solemn eye. "I'm sure that's the pond where Smith was drowned!" How many an urchin, with a vague sense of curious awe, looks for Smith in puddles—the "Proteus rising from the sea," of childish apprehension!

The reader cannot have failed to mark the wisdom of the inexorable schoolmaster, who scourges Brown because he "cannot swim," and who notwithstanding "goes into the water." Brown should have first learned to swim on dry land, ere he ventured to wet himself. The life of the man Brown shewed that the schoolboy was fully impressed with the golden lesson of the teacher; that to the end of his days he had never forgotten the wise maxims of his master. It is the accidents befalling the man, Brown, we are about to narrate; and thereby, as we fondly hope, to display a vivid illustration of the effect of early impressions. The pearls let fall by the schoolmaster Brown gathered up, and wore as amulets through life.

I.—BROWN WHO "COULDN'T SWIM."

CHAPTER I.

YOUNG Brown inherited from his father the equivocal sum of a thousand pounds. He had better inherited nothing; for, in the present state of society, we hold a thousand pounds to be not merely a useless, but a mischievous, sum: it is not a negative good, but a positive evil. What is to be done with a thousand pounds? Put it in the funds says Quiet, and philosophise upon thirty pounds a-year! There are exquisite essays written to prove the sufficiency of thirty pounds a-year, allowing at least five shillings per quarter for the conversion of the Jews; essays, in which the expenses of a pauper gentleman are so nicely calculated that it must be his own wilful eccentricity if, at the end of the year, he either owes a shilling or has one. We happen to be honoured with the short acquaintance of the author of some of these *libretti.* He had thrice been shut up in the Fleet on an income of three hundred per annum, and was consequently enabled to preach on the competence of thirty pounds a-year. It was during his third visit to the gaol that we had some interesting talk with him. He was lamenting the extravagance of the present generation; and passing his right hand under his velvet cap, and turning his pensive and eloquent eye upwards, asked us if we had ever read his book? Of course we had. We, however, ventured to question the correctness of its conclusions; in a word, we were hardy enough to express our doubts of the possibility of existing "as a gentleman"—for such were the author's premises—on thirty pounds a-year. "Look at Higginbottom," said we, "he has followed your system to a chop, and yet Higginbottom is in debt." "Pardon me," quickly returned the author, "I grant his obedience so far as the chop goes, but there were three days in the year that Higginbottom would not take his chop without pickles. Now, my system is so philosophically arranged as not to admit of even a single onion. Depend upon it, my dear sir, with a wise economy, a man may always on thirty pounds a-year obtain his chop; the ruin lies in the pickles." We were about to dispute the point, when the temperate author began to swear at a boy who entered with a bottle of port. "And where, you scoundrel," cried the author of a treatise on the sufficiency of thirty pounds per year, "where, you miscreant, are the olives? What! forgot them? Vagabond!

to suppose I could drink port without olives! Vanish! Stop! Don't make the blunder you made before: mind—*French* olives!"

We are satisfied in our belief of the worse than worthlessness of a single thousand pounds. Laid out at interest, it may bring daily bread; but what is life, without its pickles? Such was the wise conviction of young Brown, condemned to a thousand pounds. Brown had, at five-and-twenty, done nothing; a circumstance which supplied him with an inducement to go on as he had begun. When at school, he "couldn't swim," and he had been soundly birched for venturing where only he could learn. Throughout his life it seemed that the argument of the schoolmaster exercised a subtle power over the mind of the scholar. He was ignorant, and how vain the endeavour to be wise!

Brown, though a fervent admirer of the beautiful sex, had never ventured to intrust the secret of that admiration to any person the most likely to be interested in it. At one-and-twenty, he was moderately in love with Maria, the daughter of the village attorney; Maria Writly, whose honoured father would have been but too happy to assign his seventh child to the protection of our hero. Brown, however, was conscious of his inexperience: he never had made love, and it was so awkward to begin to learn. He was sure that his passion became stronger and stronger; he thought, too, that the young lady saw it, and smiled benignantly upon its growth; still, he never had spoken to any woman upon a subject generally so offensive to the sex, and, perhaps, it was not yet time for him to open his mouth.

"Bless you, it's nothing," said Jack Simmons, clerk to old Writly. "Take my word for it," said Jack one day to Brown, "it's nothing."

We fear our lady readers will be somewhat scandalised when they learn that what Jack Simmons proclaimed to be nothing, was no other than that most important passage in the life of every biped, whether the active or the passive party—a declaration of love. Nothing!

"Well, it may be," said Brown, "very likely: but then, Jack, the fact is, I—if I must speak—I never did make an offer."

"I'll defy Solomon," replied Jack, "to find any young gentleman a better reason for beginning at the very earliest opportunity."

Brown thrust his fingers through his hair, and looking upon the ground, and then into the sky, and then turning his head, and staring in the face of Jack Simmons, said, in a very serious voice, "Jack, I never did it." Jack laughed.

Time passed on, and Brown remained silent, because he had

been silent; every hour and every day adding, in his opinion, a new reason for his taciturnity. Jack Simmons ceased to advise where his advice bore no fruit, and the early friends became mere acquaintance. Jack was one of those enviable, prosperous spirits, who look upon the very best things of this world as things made for themselves: hence when fortune offers her goods, taking them with scarcely a flushing of the face or a trembling of the nerves, to betray a delicious feeling of surprise. Jack would have taken a coronet from the hand of the goddess, and clapping it upon his head, as if it were no more than a new beaver, would have walked airily away. While a humble, fearing spirit would have offered thanks for a hedge-side crab, Jack Simmons would have helped himself to a pine at five guineas, whistling as he cut it. Hence, Jack Simmons had many pines, when other Jacks were gaping for the crudest little apple!

Two months had flown since the meeting of Brown and Jack, when Jack had, in the opinion of Brown, sacrilegiously avowed a declaration of love to be "nothing." It was a beautiful morning in June, and Brown—with thoughts of Maria Writly in his heart and head, and fishing-tackle in his hand—crossed the paternal threshold. Now he thought of Maria, and now of trout; now of his long-deferred declaration, and now of his bait. With the mixed feelings of a lover and an angler, though they may be thought the same, Brown plodded onward. He passed the school: his former master—his benefactor—was gone: a stranger flogged another generation, and, let us hope, with justice, strength, and wisdom equal to the gifts of his predecessor. Brown turned the corner of a lane; an action that, although lost upon the reader, denoted the two possessing passions of the pedestrian: the lane led to the stream wherein Brown hoped to catch his fish, and half-way up the lane stood the cottage of Jeffrey Writly, attorney-at-law.

We know not whether the reader has felt a surprise that has often smote us in our many wanderings through little country towns. If so, we could wish to exchange opinions on the matter. Why is it that the house of the lawyer and the house of the apothecary are nine times out of ten at some distance from the crowds of houses composing the town? Why do they stand—if we may use the term—pushed away from the sociality of neighbours? We believe there are certain statutes which confine the workers in unhealthy and noisome trades to the outskirts of a city; but what—we ask it of the curious—what principle *can* operate to the banishment of the lawyer and the apothecary? "We pause for a reply."

And Brown "paused," but for what, we will leave the imagina-

tive reader to guess. He stood, his rod upon the ground looking at the chamber window of Maria Writly, his unaccosted mistress!

"Now might I do it, pat, now he is praying,"

cries the vacillating Hamlet stumbling on the kneeling Claudius Now, thought Brown, as he gazed upon the lattice, now could I tell my love, although I never did before. Brown stood and looked.

Oh, reader! if you have ever been in love—and if you have not, you are worse than any beast of years of discretion—and if having been in love, you have ever stood and looked at the lattice of your sleeping mistress, have you not felt your heart drawn up—up—up to the casement? Has not the house lain in the sweet moonlight, or basked in the morning sun like a living thing? That within it you have loved has given a sense, a vitality, to the outward walls: you could with reverent, pilgrim lips have knelt and kissed the threshold: the martlet building beneath the eaves was to you a sacred thing—a household religion. There was not a part of that habitation—we care not whether of stone or mud—that was not enriched by the unconscious magic of the dear sleeper within. As the sun rose, from the very chimneys, as from the olden statue, it drew forth hidden harmonies.

We cannot answer for the feelings of Brown, but we put it to the reader to say what our hero ought to have felt, gazing at the sweet domestic cot, where his own unpaired dove lay nestling. No stranger would have thought the cottage the house of Jeffrey Writly, the town attorney. It was a very bower built of roses, jessamine, and honeysuckle—an abode for Flora. Not a brick but was hidden by some climbing shrub. "Jeffrey Writly live here! who'd have thought it?" Such was the cry of those suddenly made aware of his practice, but before ignorant of his dwelling-place. We remember a circumstance which provoked a like surprise in an elderly lady admiring, with others, a most beautiful foreign snake. "What a lovely skin! What a beautiful outside! What a dear! Ha!"—and the lady gave a truly feminine shriek—"Look at its sting! Well, who'd have thought it!"

Brown continued to gaze in silence, when there suddenly broke upon his meditations a sound of wheels. He turned his eyes from the window of Maria, and bending them upon the dusty, white road, walked, trailing his rod behind him, slowly on. He was absorbed, fighting his infirmity; yes, he felt his silence to be weak—foolish: he certainly would declare himself

to Maria; because he had not spoken, should he always hold his tongue? Because he knew not how to make love, was he never to learn?

"Hey! hillo! hey! Want to be run over?" shouted a voice behind.

Brown started to the side of the road, looked round, and amidst a cloud of dust raised by the vehicle, caught a rapid, but a very certain glance of Maria Writly, about three minutes before lifted from her bedroom window by Jack Simmons, who, for his politeness, had been rewarded by the lady with a seat by her side. Brown had been wafting all sorts of prayers and wishes to the sleeping Maria; the said Maria at the time waiting with her bandboxes for Jack Simmons and a postchaise. Within the past month a dead aunt had considerably enhanced the value of Maria Writly, at least in the judicious eyes of Jack Simmons.

Angling is a contemplative employment: hence, Brown having lost his mistress was, we presume, in the best mood to fish. He walked to the stream — to that very stream into which in bygone years he had ventured with Jones, Robinson, and the hapless Smith!

It was evening when the suffering Brown returned from the "great waters." The day had, indeed, been luckless; a truth that unconsciously escaped him. He returned down the lane; but, could he pass the cottage of Maria? No; again he paused before the door; again he stared at the window.

"What sport to-day?" asked a yeoman of the rapt angler, still looking at the window. "What sport?"

"Too bad—too bad!" said Brown, pondering the flight of Maria.

"What! got nothing—eh?" cried the farmer.

With a profound sigh, and an unutterable look at the casement, Brown incoherently exclaimed, "Not even a nibble!"

CHAPTER II.

We have seen Brown fail in his first hopes—we have seen him a victim to the dogma of his schoolmaster. The judicious sentence of that profound teacher continued, as we hope to show, to influence the conduct of the pupil through all his days. The fate of Brown was a practical example of the wisdom of the pedagogue. Jack Simmons and Maria Writly are man and wife, and Brown is gone from his native village.

"A thousand pounds! What can I possibly do with a thousand pounds?" asked Brown with an air of deep distress. The question was put to a middle-aged man with a pounds-shillings-and-pence face, who shrank from the question as a devout Mahometan would recoil from the profane inquiry of a Jew.

"Do with it, Mr. Brown?" cried Dribbleton—(he had been left executor by Brown deceased)—"Do with it!" Dribbleton raised his eyes to the ceiling and was dumb.

"I have never been used to money," observed Brown; "and —and" the helpless condition of the speaker was really pitiable, "what *can* I do with it?"

"Do with it?" exclaimed Dribbleton, for the third time; "why," and the advice was quite paternal, "lay it out to the best advantage." Solon, turned huckster, could not have spoken better wisdom. It was, however, lost upon Brown, who still excused himself from future action on the cogent ground of past and present passiveness.

"Suppose, Mr. Brown—for I think I can put you in the way of turning your patrimony to account—suppose you go abroad, and"——

"I should have no objection whatever; only, the fact is, I—I never *was* at sea," said Brown, "and how *can* I go?"

"Then what is to be done with you?" cried Dribbleton, with a look of despair, and the look was exchanged with interest by Brown.

The main points of the above brief dialogue were for several days repeated. At length, Dribbleton, on the seventh meeting with Brown, had prepared himself to end the difficulty, at least so far as it involved his duty as an executor.

"Well, Mr. Dribbleton!" said Brown, entering the room with his customary sickly smile, "Well, Mr. Dribbleton!" and he sank resignedly upon a chair.

The executor acknowledged the greeting; lifted the lid of his desk; took from it a bank-note; produced a stamp; and then held out a pen to his visitor, who continued to stare wonderingly at the action. "Here is the note," said Dribbleton; "and now sign me a receipt. My time is precious, Mr. Brown, and—you see—it is a thousand pound, and—" and still Dribbleton proffered the goose-quill.

"But I never did sign for such a sum," said Brown; "and if, Mr. Dribbleton"— but the executor was inexorable. He almost forced the pen between the rigid thumb and finger of Brown, who, after a great internal struggle, signed the receipt: as he let fall the pen, he broke into a perspiration, for he had never signed for a thousand pounds before!

Brown quitted Mr. Dribbleton, and, with a thousand pounds upon him, found himself alone—alone in the hungry streets of wicked London. Here was a situation! With his hand griping the note in his pocket, he stood and stared about him. As his fingers played with the flimsy treasure, he felt as if his whole anatomy was turning into Bank paper. He could scarcely breathe, so much was he oppressed with a sense of his own value. He seemed sublimated into one piece of treasure! And then—for we will not be silent on the infirmity—the uncharitable looks he darted upon every passenger! Brown, with only a trifle in his pouch, was really a benevolent fellow,—thinking the best of everybody about him. But the same Brown with a thousand pounds in his pocket looked upon every man, woman, and child as a trickster and a cut-purse. With his fingers still playing about the paper to be sure of its presence—with his whole anatomy drawn in and up, and his eyes, like the eyes of a bandit in the phantasmagoria, rolling from side to side, Brown pursued his way, starting at intervals from the too near approach of suspected passengers. It will impart a vague idea of the morbid terror of Brown—of his fantastic weakness, transforming goodness itself into something evil—when we inform the reader that our hero absolutely trembled and grasped his note with a convulsive hand as he was accidentaly jostled by what he considered to be three notorious pickpockets, when, in very truth, they were a leash of the most respectable stockbrokers; nay, once, in his fright and fumbling for the note, he was about to scream "Stop thief!" after an elderly gentleman, who proved to be not only a Quaker, but a corn-dealer. May all our friends be preserved from a thousand pounds, say we: and, with the long ears of our imagination, we hear the reader respond "Amen!" Who would not rather choose philanthropy with empty pockets, than low suspicion with a thousand pounds?

"My dear fellow! the very man I wanted to see! How are you?" Such was the rapid greeting of Miles Butcherly to Brown, as he walked, or rather slunk, feverishly down Ludgate-hill, his fingers still at his treasure. "Eh! Why, don't you know me? What's the matter? Lost anything?" asked Butcherly.

Sooth to say, the manner of Brown fully authorised the question and the assumed calamity. For Butcherly having, with all the force of good fellowship, thrust his arm suddenly within the arm of Brown—the arm belonging to the hand, the fingers of which played with the bank-note—caused that valuable document to rise up to the very brink of Brown's pocket, and in so doing, we may, in popular phrase, declare brought Brown's

"heart to his mouth." Indeed, the analogy of the accidents is very striking. Thus, it was no wonder Butcherly was astonished at the strange looks of his recent friend—it was no wonder that Brown looked at Miles Butcherly as if he did not know him. Brown had a thousand pounds in his pocket, and such forgetfulness under such circumstances may have often happened. However, Brown felt that his bank-note was perfectly safe, and then held out his unemployed hand to Butcherly.

Miles Butcherly was one of the ten thousand men on town who, according to the vulgar notion, live upon nothing. There was once the same popular fallacy respecting the nature of cameleons; they sustained themselves, it was asserted, by merely breathing. Later science has shown the error of this conclusion; has proved that the animal finds nourishment in flies. Now, Miles Butcherly was a human cameleon; his enemies declared he had nothing whatever to exist upon; whereas, Miles Butcherly lived, and well too, upon flies; from the "small gilded" insect to the blue-bottle, every fly was food to him. For the present we must beg the reader to consider Brown—a fly.

"Where are you going?" asked Butcherly; and, without waiting for a reply, hospitably observed—"You must dine with me: must; I have said it."

Brown suffered himself to be walked away under custody of Butcherly, and, the effect of the first shock being past, even looked upon his friend as a sort of body-guard to the thousand pound note. They walked some distance in silence; at length, Butcherly broke the peace.

"Did you ever have a French dinner?"

"Never," said Brown; "and, as I never did, I think I"——

"Ought to have one directly," concluded Butcherly.

"My dear sir," said Brown, with new gravity, "pardon me; I assure you, as I never have, it is quite against my principles —to"——

"Nonsense," cried Butcherly: "principles! pooh!—I hate the bigotry of patriotism. A man doesn't love his own country the less for eating the dishes of other people: in the matter of dining, Mr. Brown, a man should be a cosmopolite." And on this point no man carried his theory into more frequent practice than the speaker. "Mr. Brown, whilst you live, never let politics interfere with the liberty of the knife and fork. Come along."

"But I tell you, Mr. Butcherly, it is against an established rule of my life"——

"Won't have it, Mr. Brown: if you have a hatred of the French, dine with 'em three times a week, and you'll wish to be

naturalised. Cat and dog are natural enemies; but when puss and the terrier are made to eat out of the same dish, you can't think how soon they become friends. The cooks, sir, have done more to destroy national antipathies than all the philosophers. For myself, I wouldn't declare war even against New Zealand until I had taken dinner with the chiefs."

"The New Zealanders, Mr. Butcherly! Dine with the New Zealanders!—wretches who"——and Brown was really indignant.

"Abuse 'em if you like," said Butcherly: "very economical people; we only kill our enemies—they eat 'em. We hate our foes to the last; whilst there's no learning in the end how Zealanders are brought to relish 'em."

Brown, making wry faces as he walked, was led victoriously off by Butcherly, who, in his ignorance, believed Brown to have some social prejudice against the French, which, in his own words, Butcherly was resolved "to dine out" of him. The reader, however, will hardly fail to attribute the disinclination of Brown to its right cause: he never had taken a French dinner, and therefore, he never—— but, in this instance, the resolves of Brown were as threads of flax against the strength of Butcherly. Brown, with his fingers still upon his note, was safely deposited in a house, where the steam from the kitchen, with its first odour, transported the visitor direct to Paris.

"Capital, isn't it?" said Butcherly, at about the fourth dish. "I dare say, Brown, you have heard of frogs?"

Brown sat suddenly upright, casting a suspicious eye at Butcherly.

"All safe, now—not in season." Brown again stooped to his plate. "Ha! frogs have been a dear dish to me." Brown looked interrogatively. "I'll tell you: I hate national prejudices; so brought an uncle here to 'dine 'em out' of him. He enjoyed his dinner amazingly; ate, I may say it, like a chaplain. Well he was rich—very rich, indeed—or I hadn't brought him here." Brown cast his eyes up at Butcherly. "You know, he wasn't the capital fellow you are—little wine with you, Brown; —well, when he had dined, I asked him what he thought of the French? He could say nothing; he blushed to the edges of his ears with shame. I, however, pushed the question—'What do you think of the French *now*, uncle?' 'Not so bad,' said he, with a look of contrition; 'not so bad, if they wouldn't eat frogs.' There I had him. 'You recollect the third dish,— delicious, wasn't it?' The old fellow smacked his lips with recollections of delight. 'In that dish, there were two-and-thirty frogs!' Well, what do you think of prejudice, Brown?

My uncle insisted upon falling ill immediately—was carried home—went to bed—scratched me out of his will—and died!"

"But not of frogs?" exclaimed Brown.

"Would you believe the wickedness of woman?" said Butcherly: "a nurse was found to swear that, in his last moments, she heard 'em croak! See what comes of national prejudice. A little burgundy?"

A little, and a little burgundy, and the heart of Brown melted like a jelly in his bosom, and Butcherly, with an educated eye, remarked the amiable softness of his friend, and thus, in few but significant words, addressed him. Squaring his elbows on the table, and looking up in the face of the genial Brown, Miles Butcherly observed—"My dear Brown, you couldn't lend me twenty pounds?"

In an instant, the face of Brown was as rigid as carved walnut, and his glistening eyes became like the eyes of fish. "Twenty pounds! Why, I should have no objection—none, whatever—only, as I never did lend money, I—I——" Brown could say no more, notwithstanding Butcherly felt that he had said enough.

"Not another word," said Butcherly; 'tis no matter, none in——Ha! boys—glad to see you—sit down—my friend, I may say, my bosom friend—the kind creature I've so often spoken o —my dear friend, Brown." And Butcherly introduced our hero to two young gentlemen, who acknowledged the honour with a knowing stare at the innocent Brown; who, by degrees, felt his blood glow again, again felt his heart expanding with the wine.

"I don't know how it is—surely, the hours are longer than they used to be—only ten o'clock—shall we have a cut at cards?" said one of the new comers.

"Brown, I am afraid," said Butcherly, in a voice of unaffected regret, "doesn't play."

"I never have played—never," said Brown, intending to imply that he never would.

However, the cards were brought, and one of the strangers, shuffling them with miraculous grace, lounged towards Brown, and, with a benevolence lost upon its object, observed—"O! light stakes, Mr. Brown—light stakes, for beginners. Must kill time in self-defence. What do you say, Brown?"

For a minute Brown replied not; it was plain enough that he was absorbed, paralysed by some sudden horror. He sat, his head sunk in his shoulders, his right leg raised tremblingly from the ground, as though he had trodden on a snake, and his hand—nay, half his arm—plunged into his pocket. His jaw fell,

his eyes started, and his very nose curled with terror. Had he been struck with sudden paralysis? Worse: with sudden poverty.

"What's the matter, Brown?" asked the gentleman, the cards still flying from his hand like sparks from an anvil. "What's the matter?"

"Thieves! my money—I'm robbed—robbed!" cried Brown, and he looked accusingly at Butcherly and his two friends, who rose together from their seats, and exclaimed "Sir!" Brown, however, heeded not their injured dignity; but, with a violent action of the hand, displayed that most affecting spectacle within this world of sorrows—that Gorgon to friends—that pestilence to best acquaintance—that type of worthlessness and badge of shame—an empty pocket! Butcherly and his companions beheld the exhibition with proper disgust, repeating with additional emphasis, "Sir!" Brown seized a candle, looked under the table; in an instant replaced the taper, and fell back in his chair, breathing the softest sigh. As he lay, his face broke into smiles, and opening his eyes, shaking his head, and showing a paper pellet between his finger and thumb, he merely observed, "I thought I had lost it." The truth is, Brown, too careful of the thousand pound note, had kept his fingers upon it, and rolling and rolling it until it had become as round as a bolus, it had escaped from his pocket as he rose to bow to the new-comers, who, now aided by Butcherly, sat with darkening brows, staring destruction at our hero; he merely repeating, with a new smile, "I thought I had lost it."

"You called me a —— but you know, sir, what must follow," said the stranger with the cards to Brown; "satisfaction, sir," and he tapped his fingers on the table.

"Satisfaction, sir," said the second stranger, adjusting his shirt-collar.

"Honour demands it, Mr. Brown," said Butcherly, somewhat tremulously: "I am sorry for it, but—satisfaction."

Brown smoothed out the note upon the table, and folding it, and placing it in his waistcoat-pocket, observed, "I am perfectly satisfied."

"You must fight, sir," said the first stranger, speaking very confidentially to Brown.

"Fight, sir," said the second.

"Exactly," corroborated Butcherly.

"But I never did fight," exclaimed Brown; "and therefore, I—I never can—I never will."

"You are a poltroon," said the first stranger.

"And a scoundrel," added his friend.

"A poltroon and a scoundrel," confirmed Butcherly, adding the weight of his authority.

"Poltroon—scoundrel," repeated Brown; "why, Mr. Butcherly, you don't mean to call me"——

"A poltroon, and a scoundrel," said the imperturbable Butcherly; "and, sir, if you have any doubt of the fact ——"

"Well, sir?" asked Brown. "And what then, sir?"

"Then, sir, myself and friends will have no hesitation in giving it you on a stamped receipt."

Brown was not so punctilious as to demand any such instrument. On the contrary he seemed disposed to be perfectly satisfied with the verbal acknowledgment of the parties, who were about to quit the apartment, when one of the strangers stopped, as if he had suddenly recollected some serious duty: then, returning to Brown, he thus briefly addressed him:—"You have insulted me, and you deny me the satisfaction of a gentleman: I am very sorry, but I must"—— and, with incredible dexterity, the speaker caught the nose of Brown between his thumb and finger.

"Sir—what am I to think?" exclaimed Brown, jumping from his seat; "I say, sir, what am I to think?" Brown could, for the moment, say no more, for the second stranger had suddenly caught the nose as suddenly quitted by the first. "Very sorry—very sorry," and the stranger tweaked.

"Sir—sir," cried Brown, when released, "what am I to understand—I ask, sir, what am I to understand"—— but the executioner had left the room, and Brown looked upon Butcherly alone.

"Take a seat—be quiet, Mr. Brown—take a seat, I have something to say to you," said Butcherly; and the calm dignity of his manner awed our hero into obedience. Brown sank upon a chair, gasping and rubbing his nose, that burned and glowed like a red cinder. "We have known one another some time, Mr. Brown," said Butcherly, and Brown bowed assent. "It was my wish that our intimacy should ripen into a lasting friendship." Brown rubbed his nose. "You have many admirable qualities, no doubt, Mr. Brown: it was my fond hope to endeavour to discover and appreciate them. I believe you have an excellent heart—that, altogether, you are, despite some human weaknesses, a most estimable person." Brown clasped his hands, and was overpowered by the eulogy. "But, Mr. Brown, whilst I appreciate the virtues of another, I cannot forget what is due to myself. Therefore, although I believe you to be a most humane, a most amiable, a most upright man, still, sir, the stern duty I owe to myself and to society, compels me—believe me, much against my will—to pull your nose."

The unrelenting vigour with which Butcherly asserted the right due to society and himself was in terrible contrast to the meekness, the almost mellifluous softness of speech with which he passed sentence. Had the nose of Brown been jammed between an iron staple its owner could not have roared more lustily. The landlord, the waiters, the chambermaids—the whole household—rushed to the scene of punishment. Butcherly quitted his hold, and with astonishing equanimity, and a graceful inclination of the body, passing his hand around his beaver as he spoke, he thus addressed the sufferer—

"Mr. Brown, it has cost me much to do this; I have had to struggle against the force of friendship: but, sir, society has its claims; and believe me that, in pulling your nose, I have only considered what is due to the usages of the world and to my sense of self-respect. In having pulled your nose, I disclaim anything personal. I have been grieved to do it; but self-sacrifice, Mr. Brown, makes a part of the social compact." And Butcherly, with a low bow, and pressing his hat to his breast, retired. Now, had Butcherly cut the throat of Brown in an affair of honour, could he have given a more profound, a more philosophical reason for the necessity of the sacrifice?

"Why, sir," cried the landlord to Brown, "what's the matter?"

"Matter?" exclaimed Brown—"matter!—I—I was never so served in all my days!"

"What's the matter?" asked a gentleman who entered the room.

"The gentleman has had his nose pulled, sir," said the waiter, pointing to Brown.

"Yes, sir," said Brown, "it's true—perfectly true; and what to do I don't know."

"You don't?" exclaimed the visitor.

"No, sir, I don't," cried Brown. "How should I? I should be happy to know, sir; for the fact is, sir, I—no—I—I never before in all my life—never had my nose pulled!"

The nose of Brown had been pulled—tweaked—pinched with impunity; and Brown was to all his friends a banished man. He was touched—blown to all the world. In after days he could have cut off the tainted part! could, at one stroke, have exercised the curse that still stood prominently forth between his cheeks, so that with the loss he might have gained his former friends. The nose, before its degradation, had an aquiline tendency; since its fall, it inclined somewhat upwards, at least to the morbid eyes of its wearer, as if shrinking from the approach of all things human. It was the nose of a modern saint raising itself to the sky, by scenting this world as it were a dunghill. However, in

time, Brown grew forgetful of the ignominy his nose had suffered, and found for it a sweet oblivion of misfortune in rappee. Moreover, Brown, reading the works of a certain philosopher, discovered that man sloughs his whole mass of clay once in a certain number of years; and therefore, that the nose he wore was not, in fact, the nose in years by-gone assaulted, but every particle of it a new nose—an untouched, untweaked organ: a virgin nose, a nose unpulled! Here is comfort for the family of the Browns; here is consolation for the kicked, to know that in a few years—we think seven the stated number—the shame is gone, exhaled, hour by hour and day by day, with the suffering region. Let us, however, not too far pursue this delicate disquisition: for if in seven years such changes come, what pleas may criminals put in! The pickpocket of 1837 may plead an alibi for the accused hand of 1844! "Thou canst not say 'twas *I* that did it!" exclaims the palm of later date. But we have done: there are some subtleties to be discussed only by philosophers over their spring-water and brandy: and this question of physical identity might create confusion among even the most respectable families. In a word, in a few years Brown felt that the nose he wore had never been pulled; his moral man was comforted by his material. His late dear friends and best acquaintance "bore a brain," it is true; but Brown himself slumbered in a wise forgetfulness.

CHAPTER III.

Brown continued to creep through life; every day serving him to accumulate justifying reasons for present and future inactivity. He had, fortunately, fallen into honest hands; for shortly after the accident narrated in our last chapter, he was received into the family of a small tradesman, who, relieving our helpless hero of his new perplexity—that of laying out his own money on his own wants—gave him board and bed for the interest of his inheritance, he slumbering through twenty years of his existence, with no more thought of the world around him—of its cares and its delights, than the counter of Jeremy Quick, his indefatigable landlord.

Brown, according to the theory of philosophers, was already wearing his third nose from the date of the assault by Butcherly and his friends, that is, upwards of twenty years had elapsed since that memorable catastrophe, when Jeremy Quick, with his

shining, prosperous face, and his blithe, chirping voice, entered the room of our hero with a gay "Good-morning."

"Good-morning, Mr. Quick," said Brown, laying down a morning paper—a journal that had twenty times performed the noisome feat of devouring its own words, but which was still the oracle of Brown, for the best of reasons—he never *had* read any other paper.

Mr. Quick drew a chair opposite to Brown, and seating himself, with his clasped fingers in his lap, and a more than usually lustrous smile on his smooth countenance, he looked benignantly in the face of his lodger, cleared his throat, and said, "Mr. Brown, we have now been together in this house upwards of twenty years."

"Twenty years, Mr. Quick. It quite seems to me that I have never lived in any other," said Brown. "A charming house."

"Tolerably well," said Quick: "but the fact is, I came to tell you that I am about to give up the house." Brown started and looked grave at this piece of intelligence—for it threatened his repose. Could a spider comprehend the mischief of a hair-broom, it would view that instrument with a dread akin to that with which Brown contemplated the face of Quick.

"Give up the house! explain yourself, Mr. Quick," said Brown.

"Mr. Brown," and the smiling landlord approached his lodger, and shook him cordially by the hand—"Mr. Brown, it is now upwards of twenty years since we were introduced to one another. At that time, sir, you had a thousand pounds."

"A new sum to me—I may say it, quite a trouble. It was a happy day for me when I met you, Mr. Quick," said Brown.

"You had exactly one thousand pounds," repeated Quick, "and that—that was twenty years ago."

A cloud fell upon the face of Brown. From the manner of Quick, our hero rashly divined that his landlord was about to exhibit a long accompt for bed and board, placing him in the light, or rather in the dark shadow of a debtor. "I told you, Mr. Quick," said Brown, his face colouring somewhat—"I told you, you couldn't afford it. To have lived and lodged as I have, and on the interest of only a thousand pounds, I told you it was not to be done. I knew that when you came to reckon"——

"Hear me, my dear Mr. Brown—compose yourself,"—for Brown began to shift restlessly in his seat—"compose yourself, and hear me. Ha! sir, you can't tell what I suffered for six months after I received you."

"And I have been a burthen, and I—I have never seen it!" cried Brown, in a contrite spirit.

"You have been a blessing to me, Mr. Brown," said the whip-maker—for Quick, the kindest of men, was, in the way of business, a dealer in scourges—"listen to me, sir; pray, listen. When we met I had been married two years"——

"Martha was thirteen months old," said Brown.

"To a day," said Quick. "I had no capital—none; all my stock was in my window. I hadn't a friend when I met you. Well, you forced your money on me; it was, you said, of no use to you; you had never been in trade; all you wanted was"——

"What I have had, Mr. Quick: your roof, and your board, and no trouble," said Brown.

"'Tis all over now; but you don't know the days I was worn, the nights I lay awake, the blame I heaped upon myself for having used what was not my own; the dreams I had, seeing you houseless, and in rags, and I—I the cause, Mr. Brown."

"But that hasn't happened, Mr. Quick; and as it never has"——

"I bless my stars, Mr. Brown, there's little fear of it now. There, Mr. Brown," and Quick laid a slip of paper in the hand of his lodger.

"What is this? A cheque for a thousand pounds?"

"Your money, Mr. Brown," said Quick. "You had a thousand pounds when"——

"Well, but that—that is in the three per cents," cried Brown.

"Very true; but then, you see, compound interest Mr. Brown."

"Interest! but hav'n't I lived upon you?—Heaven forgive me!—for the last twenty years," cried the lodger.

"Mr. Brown,"—and Quick rose, and tears came into his eyes as he caught the hand of his tenant—"without your money I might have had no roof, no bed. Now, all I have to ask of you is, that you'll think yourself to have been my guest from the first day you came here."

"Impossible!" cried Brown.

"You must. And, what is more, you must leave this house," said Quick.

"How *can* you ask it? As I have never lived in any other for the last twenty years, how is it possible that"——

"The truth is, Mr. Brown, we have made money enough. I am rich—rich beyond every want. Now, had you used your own thousand pounds, I might have been pennyless, and you a man of wealth."

"Very true, very true," said Brown: "but then, as I never *had* ventured any money, how could I begin?"

This argument, the text of his whole life—a text whipped into

him by his schoolmaster—was sufficient to Brown, who was perfectly satisfied at having been the cause of wealth in others, he remaining poor himself.

It was a hard task for the retired whipmaker to carry Brown from London. For a long time he stuck with the tenacity of a mussel to his old abode; but was at length induced to emigrate by the circumstance of Quick purchasing an estate in the neighbourhood wherein Brown had passed his schoolboy days.

Brown was close on fifty when he returned to his native place; the self-same Brown that left it. Here he found, retired in ease and dwelling in the house of her late father, the widow of the bold, decided Jack Simmons, who had arrived at the honours of City clerk ere he slept beneath the sculptured glories of a marble monument. Quick died; his girls were married and carried off; his boys were thrifty dealers in London; and Brown, at sixty, had consumed so much food—had slept so many hours—had breathed so many tons of vital air.

Nothing was left our hero, save fishing and the evening society of Mrs. Simmons. Neighbours, with unseemly levity, would wink knowingly, and prophesy a marriage. Nay, the curate once boldly put the question to our bachelor. "People would talk; Mr. Brown was very constant in his visits to the cottage; did he really intend to marry Mrs. Simmons?"

"Really, Mr. Ringdove, the fact is, I—whatever my intentions might have been forty years ago—bless me! is it so long? I remember, sir,"—and Brown pointed to some noble elms—"those trees were then no thicker than my stick—whatever my intentions were, I—as I—that is, as I never have married, could I marry now?"

Another year elapsed, and the widow Simmons was gathered to her departed lord. Her death was somewhat sudden. To Brown it brought peculiar pain; for in their last interview high words—such was the term his self-accusing spirit gave the following syllables—had passed between him and the deceased.

"Indeed, Mr. Brown," said the widow, flinging down her cards, "I am quite tired of cribbage. Don't you play chess?"

"No, ma'am," said Brown.

"Come, then, I don't mind if I take the trouble of teaching you. Susan, bring the board."

"Madam, I feel your kindness," said Brown, calmly shuffling the cards; "but, as I never *have* played at chess, it appears to me very absurd that, at my time of life, I should attempt to learn."

"Ha! Brown, Brown!"—and the widow looked mournfully

at the bachelor—"if you had but known everything from the first, what a man you might have been!"

Brown was alone. He had no wife, no child, no kin to care for him. His sole companion was his fishing-rod; and in the long summer days he would stand or sit dreamingly upon an old plank, projecting above that stream wherein he once went to learn to swim, and was sagely whipped for the imprudence. What were his thoughts—what his meditations on the nothingness of the past, and the consequent barrenness of the present, we will not consider. Thinking of the wisdom of the schoolmaster, Brown may have sometimes seen the pedagogue rise from the water, as the Saracen saw the ghost of Angelica's brother—

"Insino al petto uscir, d'aspetto fiero."

Perhaps it was at some such moment that Brown hastily leaned his back against the rail above the plank, and that the rotten support, snapping with the weight, suffered our elderly angler to fall into the water, which had been to him the bitter waters of his youth. Happily—for Brown had never learned to swim—his mishap was witnessed by a younger brother of the line, who plucked the struggler from the death below, and, in a brief time, conducted him to his lonely home.

"It is nothing—nothing at all," said Brown to his housekeeper, who begged her master to go between hot blankets. "He never had cared for wet, and ought he to care now?"

At eleven o'clock next morning Brown was still in bed. "Medicine! he had never taken medicine; and if he were a little feverish or so, it was sure to go off. He never had kept his bed for a day, and he would get up." Brown rose.

The next day Brown kept his bed. "Your hand, sir, if you please," said the doctor, brought, on her own responsibility, by the housekeeper. "Humph! very feverish; a blister, Mr. Brown."

"Pshaw! I never had a blister," said the patient.

"And I must bleed you."

"Bleed! I tell you, Mr. Squills, I never lost a drop of blood in my life—and, therefore, I never will."

Brown was obstinate: no blister, no lancet would he suffer to approach him. The fourth day the doctor appeared, and shook his head as he looked upon the eight uncorked bottles on the sick man's table. "He had lived sixty years without medicine, and was it likely physic would do him good now?"

Squills opened the curtains, and shook his head still more anxiously. "If I had only bled him," said Squills to the curate.

"Never—never—never was bled in all my life," said Brown, and died.

Such was the life and death of Brown. Are there not Browns political—Browns philosophical—Browns scientific? Truly, the Browns are a great family.

Our next shall speak of "Jones."

II.—JONES, WHO COULD SWIM "A LITTLE."

CHAPTER I.

"Well," said he to Jones, "can you swim?" "A little, sir." "A little!" said the master; "why you were in more danger than Brown, and might have been drowned, if you had ventured much further. Take him up," said he.

Such was the argument, such the command of the schoolmaster, as shadowed forth in the immortal spelling-book of Daniel Fenning,—and the luckless Jones, because he could swim "a little," was taken up.

There is a season when the branding-iron marks less than the birch. Throughout his life Jones was content to do only a little, that little leading to nothing save the self-exaltation of the doer, who was wont to stop half-way in his purpose, rub his hands, crow, and bless his stars that he had not ventured "much further."

We hasten to take Jones from school, and present him, a full-grown responsible biped, in the metropolis.

(And here, gentle reader, we intend to follow the example of that cunning master in his art, old-fashioned Ben Jonson, who does not, like two or three of his descendants, bring on his men and women to tell their histories to themselves, as thus—"I'm a young man of an old family, very much in love with Elenora, who is about to elope with me this evening, if by any possibility I can raise the money to pay the post-boys:" or, "Hapless creature that I am! betrayed into a Fleet marriage three years ago with the heartless Edward Montgomery, who had at the time a wife and two fair pledges." No, no; Ben tells his history, exhibits his characters by incidents, not by soliloquies. That glorious brawl of Face, Subtle, and Doll Common, lets us at once into the secret of their compact—clamorously publishes the coming of the Alchymist. Thus, let an occurrence discover the inward mystery of Jones.)

Jones stood before the mansion of Lord Loaves, the newly-appointed governor of an island, far away "amid the melancholy main." Jones had walked three miles on a sultry day that he might bow to his lordship, and, on the strength of the patriotic endeavours of his uncle in several elections, ask of the governor a few crumbs of official bread. Jones stood with his friend Short, a fellow-townsman, with claims similar to his own upon the consideration of his lordship.

"Now, Jones!"—and Short was about to ascend the steps.

"Stop! stop!" exclaimed Jones; "what are you going to do?"

"Do! why this is the house," said Short.

"It is, eh? Well, I tell you what, Short," and Jones eyed the knocker he had walked two miles to touch—"this is the house, is it? Well, I tell you what"—and Jones looked very seriously at the knocker, and spoke with startling emphasis—"I tell you what—*I'll write!*" and with this determination Jones walked very boldly from the door.

Short knocked, and the sound almost paralysed the heart of the retreating Jones. The door was opened, and Short had an audience of his lordship.

A month passed away, and Short presented himself to bid farewell to Jones. Short had been preferred to one of the offices in the gift of his lordship, and was about to go on ship-board for the voyage.

"You're a lucky fellow—a very lucky fellow, Short," said Jones. "A beautiful climate you are going to—and then there's small patronage—a very nice salary, and—well, you are a lucky fellow;" and Jones looked up and down his friend, as if he had been an animal of a new species. "You *are* a lucky fellow."

"Yes, I think so. There's only one thing that annoys me; and that is parting with you." Jones shook Short's hand, squeezing it with a reciprocity of feeling. "I am sure the fellow who has got what you wanted hasn't half your ability." Again Jones shook Short's hand. "But, however, the greater the fool, the greater the——:" for the moment Short forgot his own promotion.—"That is, I—I wish you were going."

"I should have liked it—nothing better," said Jones.

"And what astonishes me is, that his lordship—for you *did* write, you say?"

"Yes, oh yes!" said Jones—"I wrote."

"Well, it is so unlike his lordship! I am so astonished that he never answered your letter," said Short.

"I—don't know for that," said Jones, hesitating.

"Don't know? I think a man who doesn't answer the letter of a gentleman deserves to—to be called out," cried Short, with some animation.

"I almost think so, too," said Jones.

"Then what excuse have you for his lordship? *He* has not answered your letter. How can you excuse that?" asked Short.

"Why, there is some excuse for his lordship," said the charitable Jones; "for though I wrote the letter—I—I never *sent it.*"

Jones, disappointed in his hopes of colonial employment, was presented with an ensign's commission by his liberal uncle. Jones looked a peaceable recruit, but who that saw him could predict what he might be—could count upon the victories he might win?

(Reader, you have this morning taken an egg at breakfast—almost the simplest of human food. It is the type of frugality—the nourishment of saints and hermits. Molly thought nothing, as she dropt it into the saucepan—it was an egg, no more. Change the circumstances; and, warmed by the maternal breast, or heated by an Egyptian oven, the egg is chipped—not by your spoon, gentle reader—but by a living bill! The pullet chirps and grows; time passes, and lo! a cock, glorious in his plumes, self-complacent in his harem, struts and scratches, the king of the yard. What shouts! what clamours burst from the pit! Hear you that cry of victory? What does it proclaim? This; "Bill Giles's bird has won!"—that cock's a conqueror! Look at the hero with his blood-dyed spurs! Hear his exulting trumpet. A young recruit is an egg; he may become a household thing—on the contrary, he may stalk along the plain, a mighty victor! Never do we see a raw recruit that we do not think of an unboiled egg.)

Albeit Jones, in the restlessness of his new ambition, yearned for foreign service, having promised himself the most heroic achievements on the first and least opportunity against the enemy; still do we fear that the constitutional infirmity of the young warrior would not have suffered him to annihilate the foes of England. The valiant king of France, whom the trumpet-tongue of fame declared to have "walked up a hill, and down again," exhibited greater energy than we fear fell to the lot of Jones. We have no doubt that he would have rushed—flown to gather laurels, but not finding them *half-way* up the hill, would have quickly descended, applauding himself for a Fabius, that he had not "ventured much further."

Jones was not a soldier of six months' growth ere, having

little else to do—for he had four months since given up the study of fortification—he fell in love. As nothing could be more natural, so nothing in the present case could promise greater advantages—the daughter of a retired merchant, with "a shower of beauty" and a shower of gold! Such was the desirable young woman, who danced nearly the whole evening at the garrison-ball with Jones; who smiled, coloured, vowed she must not listen to him, then heard him for the rest of the night.

Was it accident—or what was it, that, on the evening of the next day, brought together, strolling on the ramparts, Augusta Blushly and Ensign Jones?

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The reader is under a deep debt of obligation to us for the above rows of stars, which we beg he will receive in lieu of the details of a love-scene. At the same time we desire to register it as our conscientious belief that the aforesaid stars are admirable substitutes for any words that can by any possibility, be spoken by persons meeting with the same motives, and under the same circumstances as Augusta Blushly and Ensign Jones. All that is to be said upon such a matter was said (according to the Chinese) ten thousand years ago, and everything uttered on the subject since that time is only a vile plagiary, which we are convinced every reasonable man and woman, betrayed into an unguarded time of life, like not, at a later season, to be reminded of. It is to such we write: hence, we will not, with some professors, seek to make our heroes, like Falstaff, "long-winded" with barley-sugar bought of love.

Jones and Augusta met and met again. Unhappily, however, Augusta had a father. Not that Miss Blushly had before had cause to lament that accident; but circumstances will arise peculiarly trying to the obedience of a daughter. Mr. Blushly, with every respect for the military character in the abstract, cared not for it in the person of Ensign Jones. It was very strange that Mr. Blushly could not view an object with the same eyes as his daughter. Very strange!

"We must part for ever," said Augusta to Jones, and then proceeded to describe to the amiable young soldier a late scene with her father, in which—so blind was Mr. Blushly to the merits of our hero—she had been forbidden to see Ensign Jones again; under penalty of close confinement, a regimen of bread and water, with more than a hint of the addition of iron bars at her chamber window.

"Then, no time is to be lost," exclaimed the Ensign.

"What would you do?" cried Augusta, in the voice, and with the looks of a heroine.

"Nothing remains—nothing but flight," said Jones.

"Flight!" and from the horror painted on the countenance of Miss Blushly, it was evident the suggestion was wholly new to her.

"Flight," repeated the young soldier; and no veteran General ever pronounced the word with greater decision.

"Fathers, though cruel, should be obeyed," said Augusta.

"When they would tyrannise over the affections of their children—then they snap apart the ties that bind——"

The reader must finish the period from his own imagination; for Augusta Blushly, sinking in the arms of Ensign Jones, left him no more to say. The fortress had surrendered, and, as the mature reader may think, without discretion.

CHAPTER II.

The "White Lion" was an inn enjoying the best reputation on the North Road: the outward sign betokened the purity, and, withal, the strength of the potations to be had within. Mrs. Fairday, the amiable and fortunate landlady, presented her welcoming countenance at the door, as a chaise drove up. It was dusk, but the hostess, with an educated eye, read at a glance the interesting history contained in the inside of the vehicle; for there sat Augusta Blushly and Ensign Jones. The lady, with uneasy looks at her lover, resigned herself to the hospitality of Mrs. Fairday, who ushered her into the best apartment, and, though perfectly aware of the venturous step taken by Miss Blushly—the rash girl had positively gone off with Ensign Jones, leaving nothing behind her but her prayers for her father, inclosed in a note upon her dressing-table—never ventured to hint at the imprudence, but lavished every kindness and attention upon Augusta.

"I think, post-boy, there's nothing to be afraid of now?" said Jones, as he gave the man a guinea.

"Never was more comfortable about anything in my life, sir," said the post-boy, pocketing the coin with "measureless content."

"Yes, yes—I think we've gone far enough for to-night," observed Jones, complacently throwing himself into a chair. "Some supper. Now, my dear Augusta"——

"If—if papa," murmured the young lady, looking almost reproachfully at Jones.

"It's impossible he should come up with us; we're twelve hours the better of him: and to-morrow, to-morrow at six, my beloved Augusta, we'll be on the road again. In the evening we shall reach——Hush! the waiter."

Supper was brought. Mrs. Fairday was incessant in her attentions. Jones ate and drank with the healthiest appetite, whilst Augusta played with the untouched wing of a fowl, continually casting glances towards the window.

"It's a very fine night, ma'am, is it not?" asked Augusta of the landlady.

"Fine, but cold, miss; and the roads are very heavy," said Mrs. Fairday.

"'Twould be killing you to go on to-night," cried Jones, and he swallowed some wine. "I tell you, my love, we are far enough."

Augusta bit her lip, and in silence looked towards the window.

"Another wing, dearest?" and Jones, with a deep look of love, and a winning smile about his mouth, proffered the member to the statue-like Augusta. "I wish, my sweetest girl, you'd take another wing."

"I wish I could take half-a-dozen," replied the fair runaway, with an expression of bitterness not lost upon the acute Mrs. Fairday, though unnoticed by the simple Jones.

"Now, you don't eat at all," exclaimed the Ensign with surprise. "I declare you've touched nothing. You don't like it? Now, my darling girl——Oh! never mind Mrs. Fairday;" and Jones rose, and took the hand of Augusta, the landlady quitting the room. "Now, my dearest life! what will you have? What in the whole world would you most like?" and the Ensign hung over the fair and trembling maiden, soon to become his bride. "Why don't you speak, love? What—now tell me—what in the whole world would you most like?"

"Post-horses, Mr. Jones—post-horses!" and Augusta suddenly rose, looked with flashing eyes upon her lover, then burst into tears, and again sank upon the chair. Jones was astonished—paralysed by the violence, the emotion of Miss Blushly.

"Now, Augusta! dearest Augusta! how can you be so silly? 'Twould be killing you to go on to-night: you have been harassed, agitated, fatigued beyond endurance; I am sure you have:" and the lover pressed the fingers of his mistress, who, dead to the attention, sat with her eyes bent upon the whiskers of a tiger worked in the hearth-rug, vehemently beating her little foot upon the effigies of that carnivorous animal. "Augusta!" exclaimed Jones, and he seemed to pull the words by syllables from the very end of his heart—"Augusta!"

"Oh! Papa!" cried the girl, in self-accusing voice, deaf to the winning tones of her passionate lover.

"Now, you will distress yourself without cause. I tell you, my own, own life,"—at these words Augusta stared coldly at the fervent Jones, but no coldness could chill warmth like his—"I tell you we are quite safe until early to-morrow; you will then be refreshed for your journey; at six we shall be on the road to happiness again."

"You will lose my fortune, Mr. Jones, should my father overtake us," said Augusta, with sudden composure.

"Your fortune! My angel, speak not of your fortune,—it is you, and you alone that"——

"You'll stay to-night, then, sir?" asked Mrs. Fairday, entering suddenly.

"Yes: prepare two rooms—and mind"—and Jones gave the order with great emphasis—"be sure that the chaise is ready by six—not a moment later—six," and away, with shrugging shoulders, and, we fear, a contemptuous curl of the lip, went the hostess.

"Should my father come up with us, you'll never see me more," said Augusta.

"Name it not! See you no more! How—how could I survive it?" asked the hero.

"He has already threatened to send me to France, and to shut me up in a nunnery," observed Augusta; and the young lady began to speak much more tranquilly. "Yes, I assure you, Mr. Jones, in a nunnery," and Miss Blushly, we fear, out of the very frowardness of her sex, smiled at the threat of the very best of fathers.

"And does my own beloved think that the walls of a mere nunnery could hold her from my arms? No, Augusta, I would dare dangers—death—and tear you from the very altar!" As Jones made this proclamation, he felt nothing less than Louis Quatorze.

"You would?" asked Augusta, with half-shut eyes, and an indescribable smile. "You would, indeed, Jones?"

"Can you doubt it?" cried the soldier, and with a fervour that would have made it very uncivil in a lady to suspect him.

"Well, that would be a romance. To break open a nunnery for me! Well, I declare! Ha! ha!" and Augusta laughed, and Jones laughed too, though to a quicker ear than fell to the lot of Jones, the mirth of his mistress might have rung a little hollow.

"I wish, my darling life, I could have prevailed upon you to

take some fowl," said Jones, quickly returning from nuns to pullets.

"After all, I think I might as well," replied Augusta, whose appetite seemed to accompany her returning composure.

"That 's right. Why, that's like yourself, dearest," cried the encouraging Jones. "You are quite assured again."

"Yes, Mr. Jones, yes; but—but it has cost me an effort." And had Jones not been as blind as love, he might have seen that, as Augusta raised the wine to her lips, she grasped the arm of the chair, as if sustaining herself against some strong emotion.

"Some more wine, love?" and Jones was about to fill.

"No more—not a drop, Mr. Jones;" and Augusta became pale, and trembled slightly.

"You are not well, my angel?" observed Jones, very innocently.

"I was better this morning, at least I thought so—but I am not so unwell as I was a short time since."

"And yet you would have gone on! Why you see how wise it was in me not to have ventured any further!"

"It is impossible, Mr. Jones, to dispute your discretion."

"Whereas, to-morrow, as I said—to-morrow, my charming girl—at six to-morrow ——" and Jones looked in the frozen eyes of Augusta.

"Six—to-morrow," echoed the maiden.

"When the lark is singing his song in heaven—when the glory of the sun—the balminess of the morning—the——"

"Ha!" shrieked Augusta, as she heard sudden footsteps in the passage, and ran to the door: ere she reached it, it was opened, and Augusta had thrown her arms about the neck of a middle-aged gentleman, and was sobbing "Papa—papa!—dear papa!"

"Caught ye, eh? Caught ye!" exclaimed Mr. Blushly.

"I'm so glad—I'll go home—directly, papa—directly!" said the girl, with evident delight.

"Augusta!" cried Ensign Jones, with no less astonishment at the fickleness of his mistress.

"Oh, papa! I see I have been wrong—very wrong—pray forgive me! And, Mr. Jones——"

"Augus— Madam!" answered the lover.

"You have, by your eloquent discourse, quite convinced me that you and I have journeyed far enough as fellow-travellers, and that it would be very, very irksome indeed, at least to one of us, to venture any further."

So saying, Miss Blushly presented to Ensign Jones, as tokens

of remembrance, a most elaborate curtesy, and a look of arch contempt, enough, in our opinion, to have levelled a constable.

Miss Blushly was handed by her happy father into the carriage, and driven to another inn—Jones being left a doomed bachelor for the remainder of his existence.

"She was a beautiful girl—had money, too—amiable and all," Jones would say, in after-life; "and yet, who knows how things might have turned out, had I ventured much further?"

CHAPTER III.

In the course of years, and by means of purchase, Ensign Jones ripened into a Lieutenant. He had, on the outset of his career, bounded his ambition by a colonelcy: he had, however, advanced only a second step towards the dignity, when, at the age of forty, he felt that he had gone far enough; and, his uncle dying, and bequeathing him house and lands, our hero sheathed his sword, and became a simple country gentleman. Leaving others to look for laurels, he would employ his energies in the cultivation of potatoes. And then the improvements he would effect in the old-fashioned mansion, in the much neglected grounds! And, as in the beginning of everything, Jones always addressed himself to the highest authority on the subject, so, on taking possession of his new property, and meditating on the miraculous changes to be wrought in it, he called about him, and at the same time, twenty writers on draining, building, grafting, the growth of pines, and the breeding of cattle. Were a pig-sty to be erected, Jones would first consult Vitruvius.

"Well, Mattocks,"—thus spoke Jones to his steward, after two months' sojourn on his new property—"I am afraid, Mattocks, that the people about here are no better than they should be."

"'Twould be very difficult for some of us to live with 'em if they were," answered the steward, who had already sounded the character of his master.

"But I understand, Mattocks—indeed, I am sure of it—that there are poachers — poachers in the place," cried Jones. "They've been greatly encouraged, I fear? Now, who's to blame, eh? Tell me, whose fault is it?"

"Why, sir, if I must speak out, I think all the fault lies with the pheasants. Your uncle, sir"——

"My uncle was a very excellent man, Mattocks; but he was too easy with all the world. My uncle, good man! he'd not

only have stood and bowed to a footpad, but would have thanked the thief for robbing him."

"He was, to be sure, a generous gentleman," said the steward.

"I like generosity, Mr. Mattocks: but I am also an admirer of perseverance and firmness: I can give away, I trust, with a grace; but I—I can't be robbed. So listen; tell the keeper to arm half-a-dozen men, and let them all night keep watch in the preserves."

"Armed men, sir! Guns! Why there never was such a thing heard of in the village," cried the steward.

"I'm sorry for it—very sorry that all the conveniences of life have not been better considered. And, Mr. Mattocks, I can't have my orchard a land of promise for all the boys in the country. Your boys about here are, I am afraid, very licentious."

"Very fond of apples, sir," replied Mr. Mattocks.

"You'll immediately get a dozen traps for the orchard and gardens," ordered Jones, looking sternly.

"Traps! Now really, sir, you'll pardon me, but you'd better chain a live griffin to every apple-tree than—traps! I don't think there's one in the county."

"I thought not, Mr. Mattocks—I thought not: that's why the gaol's so full. I thought not: that's why the county gaol is to be enlarged. You will, however, see my orders done. And, Mr. Mattocks, I'll not have my ponds fished in. Yesterday I ran after a boy whom I caught angling for trout. I wish I had caught the young rascal," said Jones.

"I know the boy, sir: he came back in the evening; and—for I had seen you after him in the morning—and then I seized him," said the steward.

"Very right—very right, Mr. Mattocks. It is these little pilferings that are the beginning of burglaries and murder. You took away the tackle from the offender, I trust?"

"Yes, sir; all the boy's tackle—willow-switch, thread, crooked pin, and everything," replied Mr. Mattocks, with a sly look at Jones, who coughed, affecting not to hear a description of the spoil.

And thus Jones, to the bewilderment of the neighbourhood, began to display that energy, that perseverance, to him so essential to the perfect man. Men—foreigners, as they were termed by the dwellers on the soil—were hired from a distance, and, armed to the jaws, watched in the preserves. Painted notices of traps and spring-guns stood menacingly in the forbidden orchards; three mastiffs of spotless breed, were entrusted with the guard of certain tenements; and Home-pickle

Hall, the late abode of peace, seemed turned into a fortress to overawe the surrounding country. The cage, that either the morals of the people or the neglect of the magistracy had suffered to become a ruin, was surveyed, and its condition reported to 'Squire Jones, who, as it was complained, with more public spirit than benevolence, had resolved to repair it at his own cost; and a confidential retainer had, it was said, heard the landlord, in an unguarded social hour, promise a new coat of paint to the unused stocks.

All these improvements, all this energy on the part of Jones, as may be supposed, did not pass without a significant acknowledgment from the people. The stranger, who would learn the last resting-place of the new landlord's uncle, had only to watch the deportment of the villagers on meeting Jones coming to or returning from church. They looked with a blank stare in the face of Jones, and then, turning from him, made a profound reverence to the monument of the dead. This went to the heart of Jones, who, really wishing the good-will of all men, and even ignorant of the causes that withheld it from him, was, from a weakness in his character, hated as a despot.

Two or three weeks only had elapsed since the above scene with Jones and his steward, when the landlord, taking a solitary ride down a green lane, was roused from a deep study by the voice of a woman.

"That's he—there he rides! Oh, that there was a pit under his horse's hoofs!" cried the woman, pointing out Jones to a little ragged boy shambling by her side. "That's the blood-shedder!"

"My good woman," said Jones, pulling up his horse, "are you mad?"

The woman paused, turned round upon Jones, ground her teeth, and, with a look of hate, raised her clenched hand to the sky. She then, without a word, strode onward.

"My good woman—I say—my little boy—tell me, what's the matter?" and Jones cut off the retreat of the frightened urchin, who looked piteously after his mother. "Don't be afraid—what's the matter?"

"Father's very bad," said the little fellow.

"Very bad? What is he, eh?"

"He goes out—he goes out to work of nights; and he crawled home last night all over blood;" and the child began to whimper.

"All over blood! Why, don't be afraid, and tell me all; and look—here it is—I'll give you this guinea. Your father came home all over blood? Where did he get hurt?" asked Jones.

"Don't you say I told you," said the child, his eyes glittering at the guinea; "but he was in Squire Jones's ground."

"And what's your name?" demanded Jones, feeling himself an accused culprit. "What's your name?"

"Jemmy Atkins," said the boy.

"Take that to your mother," cried Jones, and flinging the boy the guinea, our landlord turned his horse round, and galloped back to the Hall. "Well, Mr. Mattocks"——

"Yes, sir," observed the steward, at the door, as the 'Squire dismounted.

"In my study, Mr. Mattocks." The steward followed his master, who looked pale, and trembled as he tried to speak.

"What has happened, sir?" asked the steward anxiously.

"Murder has happened, sir! Do you know a man named Atkins? that man was wounded in my grounds last night."

"I heard there had been a scuffle, sir," said Mattocks.

"A scuffle, sir! And do you suppose, sir, that I will have blood shed? What do you take me for, Mr. Mattocks?"

"Really, sir—I—permit me, with deference, sir, to ask you two questions?"

"Go on, sir—go on; twenty—but go on," said Jones, scarcely suppressing his wrath.

"Did you not give orders that men should patrol the preserves?" asked Mattocks.

"I did, sir," said Jones.

"And did you not order the men to be armed?" asked Mattocks.

"Granted," said Jones.

"Well, sir!" cried Mattocks, "am I to blame?"

"Certainly—most certainly. I own I ordered the men to be stationed there—I ordered them to be armed; but sir, I—I didn't order them to use their arms. I thought, naturally enough, every reasonable person would have thought so, that putting weapons in their hands would be going quite far enough."

"I don't believe, by what I have heard, that the mischief is very great," said the steward.

"I hope not—I hope not. See—but don't let it be known—that the man's attended to; and, hark ye, Mr. Mattocks, let the keeper discharge all his followers."

"And ar'n't the man-traps to be kept set, sir?"

"Kept set!" exclaimed Jones, in astonishment. "What! have they been set at all?"

"Carefully set, sir," answered the steward.

"Mr. Mattocks, I'll have no such doings on my estate, sir

It's all very well that the boards should remain; but on second thoughts, I think that's going quite far enough."

"And then the mastiffs, sir?"

"They can't bite—and they *may* frighten trespassers," said Jones.

"Can't bite, sir!" cried the astonished steward. "Why not, sir?"

"Why not? Because, of course, you muzzled them. The look of the dogs will be found quite sufficient—yes, that will be going quite far enough."

But the mischief was done; and Jones, despite his pacific intentions, had for ever forfeited the confidence of his dependants. He took refuge in Parliament from the weariness of rustic life, and, to his own astonishment, distinguished himself as a very eloquent member. At a dissolution he again presented himself to his constituents, who, with little ceremony, rejected him.

The disappointment was too much for Jones: he was mortally wounded by the ingratitude of man. He pined and pined, and died a rejected member.

"Ha, Doctor!" he would say, "I don't know who would serve his country. You see how I have been treated! Rejected for—but no matter. And yet I should like to know what complaint they *could* have against me?"

"Why, I—I have heard, 'Squire, that they charge you with inconsistency."

"Inconsistency!" cried Jones.

"Yes, on the—the —— Bill," said the doctor.

"Why, I spoke and voted for it on the first reading, didn't I?"

"You did."

"And on the second?"

"Assuredly; but then you spoke and voted against it on the third."

"I confess it; for," exclaimed the dying patriot, "I thought I had gone quite far enough."

Jones was never married, yet have we heard it stoutly maintained that he has had sons and grandsons in all parliaments downwards.

III.—ROBINSON, WHO COULD SWIM "ANYWHERE."

CHAPTER I.

Having disposed of Brown and Jones, our concluding duty is to narrate the history of the accomplished Robinson—of Robinson, who could swim "anywhere over the river."

School-birch—dead twigs though it seems—buds and bears fruit. The child feels only the branches; but how often is the produce ashes in the mouth of manhood! Let us, however, turn to the words of the wise and meek-hearted Mr. Daniel Fenning, to the page of that immortal book, which still green in its twenty-thousandth edition, teaches sweet morality to tens of thousands of the present generation.

"Now, Robinson," (says Mr. Daniel Fenning—and we quote from the amended edition of 1837) "could swim very well; and thought, as Brown and Jones were whipt, *because they could not swim*, that he should escape.

"'Well, Robinson,' said the master, 'can you swim?'

"'Yes, sir,' said he (very boldly) 'anywhere over the river.'

"'You *can* swim, you say?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'Then pray, sir, if you can swim so well, *what business had you in the water*, when you should have been at school? You don't want to learn to swim, you say? It is plain, then, you go in for idleness' sake. Take him up—take him up," said he.

Robinson "could swim anywhere;" he was therefore to remain content with the knowledge of his ability. Why should he ever exercise a power once perfectly acquired?

Despite the discipline of his master, Robinson left school with an enviable reputation. Who so clever as Jack Robinson? Though he carried off no prize-medal, his schoolfellows protested, that had he so minded, he might have secured every distinction. He would, with careless ease, give many a secret lift in Greek and mathematics to plodding dulness, that, by his means, would start off with the contested glory.

"Why, Robinson," a schoolboy friend would say, "why didn't you get the prize yourself? You know you might, if you had liked."

"I know that," Robinson would answer, "I know that;" and throughout life Robinson rested satisfied with the barren knowledge. To be once able to do a thing to perfection, was with Robinson a sufficient reason for never again attempting it.

Our hero grew up a handsome, free-hearted lad. Esteemed by the men and admired by the women, Jack Robinson was everywhere at home; and oh! the fortune, the worldly distinction that grave, wise folk would predict for Jack Robinson.

Peter Creeply was one of many cousins to Jack. "He was a poor mouse of a fellow, and would live and die in a corner." So did the wiseacres prophesy of Peter Creeply. There was scarcely a month's difference in their age, when both Jack and Peter, in their one-and-twentieth year, were guests of their uncle, Squire Chaffton, whose superficial knowledge of human nature was, in the opinion of his most intimate friends, more than remedied by his exquisite taste in horseflesh: if he had studied little of men, he had pondered much on fillies.

Squire Chaffton had, at a high price, secured a pure Arabian. The creature was shipped to England, with an attested pedigree, which proved the animal to be descended from the favourite horse of "good Haroun Alraschid." This superb creature the Squire destined as a birth-day present to his only daughter, who, after the stud, came in for all her father's affection. The filly was a present for a queen—there was not such another in the whole kingdom. The filly, however, had one frailty: its blood was as pure as the blood of the Ptolemies—its shape was faultless: with wings at its back, it would have beaten Pegasus: St. George must have sat such a horse when he speared the dragon. Yet, with all the virtues of birth and beauty, the filly had the trifling disadvantage of a wild and wayward temper. To attempt to break it, was to endeavour to tie up a fire. The eldest groom shook his head, looking hopeless looks at the beautiful Arabian.

"Great pity, sir—as we used to say of the Marchioness—great pity, sir, that good looks and good manners don't always go together."

Thus spoke Bob Spurling, in a melancholy tone, staring at the filly, and then at the Squire.

"She's very handsome, Bob," said the Squire, still rapt with his purchase.

"Just what the Marquis used to say, sir, when he paid the jeweller's bill. Very handsome, sir, but such a price!"

"She's thorough-bred—all blood," exclaimed the Squire.

"All blood, sir, and a little brimstone,—just like the Marchioness," observed that eminent groom, Mr. Robert Spurling.

"Cost me a bank of money, Bob," cried the Squire. "A lovely thing!"

"I'd let her out to sign-painters, sir—she's too handsome to ride," remarked the satirical Spurling.

" Don't you think it possible to break her, Bob ?" asked the Squire, despondingly.

" Why, look you here, sir ; when an animal has what I call original vice—that is, sir, vice it can't help—it's no use doing nothing with it. Breaking's no good—we can only pity it ; and that's exactly what I once said of the Marchioness."

" Marchioness, psha ! I tell you the filly cost me a thousand pounds."

" Never be worth her beans," answered the groom : " no more was the "——

" She *shall* be broken," exclaimed the Squire, with vehemence ; " so talk no more about it."

" Well, sir, it all depends upon whom you want her for—there's a good many folks we wouldn't mind risking upon her."

" Want her for ?—why for Lucy. Whom do you think I bought her for ?"

" What ! for your Miss Lucy, sir ? Ha, Squire, it would be entirely child-murder ! " said Bob Spurling, very gravely, and walked away.

Lucy Chaffton was a pretty, delicate girl of eighteen, who had quietly fallen in love with the gay, good-tempered, clever Robinson—he all the while as ignorant of the matter as the Arabian filly itself. " Pretty creature—very pretty creature," Robinson would say, and sometimes add, " make a man very happy, that girl—yes, nice, modest, quiet thing—make a man very happy." Though when Robinson said this he had little suspicion that he himself was the man Lucy would have chosen above all others with whom to have shared happiness. " A sweet little creature ! Egad ! I'd ride round the world on an errand for her," said Robinson, one day, as Lucy, having presented him with a purse of her own knitting, tripped, blushing and confused, from the garden to the house. Now this little incident took place about the same time that the Squire and the groom were engaged in the above colloquy on the merits and the vices of the Arabian filly.

" Well, Robert, what's the news at the stables ?" asked Robinson of the groom, who had just quitted the dissatisfied Squire.

" Very bad, sir ; haven't you seen the foreigner—the 'rabian ? —such a sweet thing, sir ! " said Robert.

" What's the matter with it—dead ?" inquired Robinson.

" Quite the contrary—got too much life, sir, as my master used to say of the Marchioness,"—Robert availing himself of every possible opportunity to speak of the noble family whose wages he had once enjoyed.

"What's her vice?" asked Robinson.

"Why, sir, this is it—as long as you keep a bit out of her mouth, or a hand from her back, she is the loveliest thing—I will say it, whether standing, lying, trotting, galloping, or only at the rack—she is the loveliest thing as ever wore a tail. For a wild un nothin' can beat her."

"Who rides her?" asked Robinson.

"Who! That's it, sir—nothin' but the flies have ever kept a minute on her," answered Spurling.

"Oh, indeed! Well, I've a month on my hands, I must have a look at her;" and Robinson turned carelessly away, and strolled towards the stables.

"You can't think, Peter," said the Squire, "how much that filly grieves me. Such a beautiful animal—such a figure—and yet so vicious."

"Ha! uncle," replied Peter, demurely, "how often do we see the same thing with men and women!"

"That's of less consequence, Peter: but with our Arabian filly, that has cost so much—it's shocking," moaned the Squire.

"Are there no hopes of her?" asked Peter.

"None, the jade! I tell you what, Peter—I bought her for Lucy—cost me a world of money—I tell you what, Peter, I'l try your spirit now: break the filly and have her," said Chaffton—"I'm tired of her."

Peter Creeply would have been delighted with the gift, if not burthened with the dangerous proviso. "You see, uncle—I—the fact is, I—I am an only son, as you know, and if anything were to happen to me—I"——

"Then you won't mount the filly? You won't have her? Come, yes or no," cried the Squire, doggedly.

"Yes, uncle, yes," exclaimed Peter Creeply; and then he felt death-sick at his sudden imprudence. It would have been a great loss to give up the filly, and yet, if he should break his neck!

"Saddle the filly," was the order of the Squire, who had walked to the stables; Peter following him, as if with naked feet he walked on broken glass.

"For Mr. Creeply, sir?" asked a stable-boy.

"Ye—es," answered Peter Creeply, and he shivered. At the moment the filly was led, bridled and saddled, from the stable, Robinson came up.

"Will you ride her—eh, Jack?" asked the Squire.

"Ha, Jack!"—and Peter spied hope—"will you back her?"

"Not I," said Jack Robinson—"not I, indeed!"

"Well, I thought he had more spirit than Peter," muttered the Squire; and Creeply, trembling from head to heel, mounted the filly, Robinson standing at her head and patting her. "He sits her remarkably well," thought the Squire—"very well." And although the animal plunged a little, Peter, to his own astonishment, easily mastered her. "Bravo, Peter! There now, if you ride her ten miles out and in without a throw, she's yours, Peter." And Creeply rode away, and in less than two hours was home again, having, as he said, made the filly quiet as a lamb.

"Well, then," said the Squire, "she's yours, Peter—you've tamed her, and take her."

"No, sir, no: do not think I ventured for myself—no, sir, 'twas for Lucy," and the young lady being present, as Peter rode to the door, he leapt from the saddle, and with all the grace he was master of, in a moment, placed the bridle on her unwilling arm.

"A lad of true spirit—a fine fellow," thought Chaffton; and then aloud to the fortunate equestrian, "Peter, you sha'n't lose by the gift, depend on't."

"You have a beautiful present, Lucy," said Robinson.

"Yes; Mr. Creeply is—is very kind," and Lucy made a slight curtsey, and hurried into the house.

"A charming girl!" sighed Robinson; "but it's no use to grieve at it—yes, Peter's a lucky fellow!"

"He shall have her—Peter's the man for Lucy," determined the Squire; and that very evening wrote a letter to Mrs. Creeply, proposing the match, instantly leapt at by the provident widow.

"In three weeks Peter will be of age; he shall be married on the very day."

The Squire was peremptory—poor Lucy was timid—Jack Robinson was melancholy and silent; a week before the ceremony feigned an excuse for his absence—an excuse readily accepted by the Squire—and in three weeks Lucy Chaffton became Mrs. Peter Creeply.

About two months after the marriage, Robinson was compelled by a family matter to visit the Squire, who, the next day, proposed a ride. "Come," said the old man, "you shall see Lucy on Fatima—she's tame and docile as a spaniel."

The horses were ordered to be saddled; the beautiful Arabian, Fatima, was led to the door. Peter Creeply was about to help his lady to her horse, when Robinson cried out—"Stop, Peter! I'd forgotten to tell you, Lucy needn't take the trouble to climb up. Here, Fat"—and Robinson patted the animal, that with its head and neck returned the caress,—"down, down;" and the filly bent, obedient, as a camel, to receive its load.

"Why—ch—Jack, who taught her that trick?" asked the astonished Squire.

"She's a good, gentle thing, and can be made to do anything," answered Robinson.

"Well, but what did you know of"——

"O! after two or three mornings, Fatima and I were very good friends;" and again Robinson patted the filly, that again acknowledged his hand, whilst Lucy hastily held the veil that the wind was blowing over her hat, close to her face.

"What! you don't mean to say, Jack, that you ever rode Fatima?"

"Yes, sir, he did, but he bound me in honour never to tell you; but now, as how Mr. Robinson's half-owned it himself" ——and Bob Spurling was proceeding, when he was checked by the Squire.

"Then, you rode her before Peter took her in hand?" asked Chaffton.

"How very odd that was!" said Peter, "and that I should never have known it!"

"Why, then," said the Squire, a little recovered from his astonishment, as he rode by the side of our hero; "why, then, Jack, you yourself might, if you had liked, possessed the filly."

"I know that, uncle—I know that," said Jack Robinson.

"Do you see that, Dick?" said Robert Spurling to a helper of the stables, and pointing to the party as they turned the lane "do you see that? Now, that's what I reg'larly call a pictur o' life."

"What's the matter, Bob?" asked the helper.

"Matter," said Robert Spurling with a sigh; "ha, Dick! in this world, it isn't him as breaks the horse, as is always doomed to win the plate."

CHAPTER II.

It was still the tantalising fortune of Jack Robinson to secure the praise of everybody, his cousin the Creeplys, by some chance or other, always obtaining the solid pudding. Ere Jack was thirty, he was an universal favourite, and not worth sixpence—whilst his cousins obtained only that sort of respect to be purchased with ready money; but having the wherewithal to buy, the market was never found deficient. Men buttoned up their pockets, and declared Robinson to be the best of fellows. It was very odd, though, that with all his talents, with all his spirit, he seemed merely to lounge in the footpath of life, whilst the Creeplys made their regular journeys to the Bank. Jack made capital jests the while, but the Creeplys made what the dull multitude agree to consider a much better thing.

"Ha! Jack," said Mr. Giaffir Creeply, "if you had but followed the Persian proverb, that says "——

"True, sir; no doubt—but as I don't read Persian," replied Robinson, "and as I moreover hate proverbs, and think them mere counters for simpletons to play with "——

"Simpletons, Mr. Robinson! A dozen proverbs, sir, may contain the wisdom of a life," answered Mr. Giaffir Creeply.

"Yes, sir; but then, like the superb set of fish that my aunt brings out at loo, though the workmanship be very costly, the application may be very foolish."

"Ha! Jack—if you would but study Persian, you don't know the jewels that are locked up in it. If you could but understand the divine Saadi!"

"Ha! Well, I'm told he's worth looking into. I'll see about it, uncle," and ere Jack slept he had resolved to set himself vigorously to work upon the task. In a couple of years, Robinson could have conversed on things in general with the Shah, in his own tongue. "Hang this lingo!" cried Xerxes, the son of Giaffir Creeply, in a confidential hour, to Jack Robinson—"why won't good wholesome English do for him? Would you think it, Jack, my prig of a father wants his epitaph in Persian? The fact is, I've sworn to him for the last eighteen months, that I have been studying my head off at the cursed language—and I don't know a word of it. As for writing the character, I could as soon make a cobweb. And yet it's his whim to have his epitaph in Orientals! Why the deuce won't a good serviceable *hic jacet* do for him?"

"An odd thing for you to write upon your living father;" said Robinson.

"Odd! devilish odd! the fact is, I—yes—I have it, I shall tell him my feelings won't let me," said the filial Xerxes, who then mournfully added, "that won't do neither: if I refuse the Persian epitaph, he'll make me write my letter for my next quarter's allowance in his filthy Eastern jargon."

"Now, the epitaph would be shorter," observed Robinson.

"Yes—I—I should very much prefer that," replied young Creeply, "but, unfortunately, I can't even do his epitaph. My dear Jack, you can't direct me to any scoundrel who knows the language, eh? 'cause, by gad! the old fellow must have it, somehow," and Xerxes, with his gold-mounted stick, emphatically rapped his boot.

"What can be said of him, eh?" inquired Robinson.

"O!—short—short, but sugary: just to touch upon the virtues that people who can afford a tombstone always have. But, who—who's to do it, Jack?" asked Xerxes, with much anxiety.

"I'll have it done for you," said Robinson,—"I know a poor devil of a fellow, who'll be at my lodgings after dinner; I'll give him the chief points, and as I shall be at uncle's in the evening, I'll bring it with me."

"Well! everybody says it, and I *do* think it—you are the best of fellows. Pity you haven't money—shame you ar'n't rich; but you *are* a good fellow for all that. Don't fail, now. Mind; let all the household virtues—the faithful husband—'loving father,' 'tried friend,' and all that, be nicely mulled up with a little eastern spice," said Xerxes Creeply, speaking of his father's epitaph as if he were ordering a cup of sack of a drawer.

Robinson was true to his promise. In the evening he presented himself at the house of his uncle, who had that day accomplished his sixtieth year; and being a hale hearty man, amused himself by playing off the small stoic, by requiring his son, on that day above all others, to write the paternal epitaph. Mr. Creeply was one of those philosophers who despise death so heartily, that they take every opportunity of protesting their contempt of it. "It was a proper thing," he would say, "for a man to walk through this world, with his coffin perpetually in his eye. Every man should have his epitaph over his mantelpiece; if it touched upon good qualities he did not possess, the satire might shame him into them."

"Only, my dear Giaffir," observed Mrs. Creeply, "as you insist upon having yours in an Eastern tongue, nobody but yourself can tell whether you'll be shamed or not."

"Depend upon me, dear madam, for a severe translation," said Mr. Shaster, a celebrated orientalist, and friend of the family.

"Jack—Jack," said young Xerxes, in a whisper to Robinson, "is it done?"

"Here it is," replied Robinson, giving a paper behind him to young Creeply.

"I say, Jack, no tricks now?" said Xerxes, advancing a little, and looking suspiciously at his cousin.

"Honour," said Robinson, "it's an epitaph for a man of twenty thousand a-year."

"But where—where is the document?" asked Mr. Shaster. "Have you done it, Xerxes? For I can tell you, more depends upon it than you think."

Young Creeply, with an assured air, presented the paper to his father, who shook him by the hand. His mother smiled, and one young lady, an eastern heiress, declared to her next friend that "Xerxes had quite the look of a profound scholar."

Everybody, save Jack Robinson, seemed to think it a serious moment; but we regret to state that our hero, possibly because he was already acquainted with the contents of the paper, instead of listening to them, gave his entire attention to a pet spaniel, which, for all the pride of its blood and birth, he insisted upon teaching "to beg;" and what is most strange, had the dog been of the lowest plebeian origin, it could not have shown itself it a more ready-witted scholar.

"Perhaps, Shaster, you will glance your eye over it for errors, and then favour the ladies with a translation?" said Mr. Giaffir Creeply.

The orientalist took the document, perused it to himself, and then, to the delight of Xerxes, smiled upon him, and said, "Very well, indeed."

"I'm charmed to hear it—charmed to hear it—a good boy, Xerxes—an excellent boy!" exclaimed the father. "Now, Shaster, the translation."

Mr. Shaster coughed thrice, and then proceeded to translate Persian into English:—

"'*In memory of Giaffir Creeply, who*'"——

"I beg your pardon, Shaster, but you say Giaffir Creeply simply—has the boy omitted the 'F.A.S.?'" inquired the philosopher. "Never mind—it can be added when engrossed."

Shaster proceeded—"'*Who fell asleep on the*'"——

"Only 'asleep!'" exclaimed Mrs. Creeply.

"That madam," said Shaster, "is an oriental synonym for 'who died.'"

"I see—I beg your pardon," replied the satisfied wife. "Quite correct. 'Who died.' And then of course there is a blank."

"Let us hope, madam, a very long blank," added Shaster, who continued the epitaph. "'*He was faithful to his spouse, as the bulbul to the rose.*'"

At this, Mrs. Creeply shifted herself in her chair, looked direct at her husband, who had accidentally turned his head quite another way. Mrs. Creeply coughed.

"'*He was faithful to his*'—— Shaster was about to repeat, when Mrs. Creeply abruptly observed—

"You've read that once."

Shaster bowed and proceeded. "'*His friendship was like the Nile*'—its source not yet come at," muttered the reader.

"Doesn't the Nile abound with alligators?" asked an innocent young lady.

"Yes, child," replied Shaster; "but that can't be the simile. Can it, Xerxes?"

"No—no, sir," replied young Creeply, fearful of the erratic spirit of Robinson.

"You had better read on," observed Giaffir Creeply, with some coldness.

Shaster obeyed. "'*His friendship was like the Nile. It teemed with good gifts to all men, yet took no account of them.*'" Shaster looked straight at old Creeply, who, with enviable presence of mind, remarked, "very prettily turned—very poetical." The reader continued. "'*His children grew like palm-trees.*'"

"Walnut-trees would have been better," mumbled Xerxes, shrugging his shoulders at boyish recollections.

"'*Goodly and fruitful. The grave of the just is as a coffer of spices. Such is the grave of Giaffir.*'"

"Plenty of cayenne there," thought young Creeply, who endeavoured to cast a thanksgiving look at Jack Robinson, at the time giving his undivided attention to Fairy, patiently seated upon its haunches, and winking resignedly in the face of its instructor.

"Beautiful," "beautiful," murmured everybody, "and so true," added more than one benevolent person.

"Very beautiful," said Mr. Creeply, sen., approaching the corner where Robinson, rapt in his employments, sat. "Capitally done."

"Yes," cried Jack, thoughtless of the epitaph, and all his mind given to Fairy, "begs like a Christian, doesn't she?"

"Mr. Robinson!" exclaimed Giaffir Creeply, in a loud voice.

"Hallo!" answered Jack Robinson; "what's the matter?"

"I did think, sir, though I never counted extravagantly upon your affection—your respect, I mean—I did think that on my birth-day, and on so solemn an occasion as—yes, I did think that I might have come in for at least a share of your attention with a dog."

"To be sure, why not?" asked the ingenuous Robinson.

"When my epitaph was read, sir—yes, my epitaph—and none of us, no, not even the youngest and the healthiest know how soon they may require it, Mr. Robinson;" and Giaffir became almost pathetic.

"Well, what have I done? I promised to teach Fairy to beg, and—and how did you know, uncle, that I couldn't do that and pay every attention to your epitaph, too?" inquired Jack. "Greatest respect for you in the world, uncle," said Jack, at the same time menacing with his forefinger the mendicant spaniel still erect upon the table.

The stoical Giaffir Creeply made no reply; but, glancing at the object of Jack's attention, he caught the spaniel by the neck, and flung it to a distant end of the room. Mrs. Creeply and her eldest daughter screamed and ran to the yelping pet, whilst Mr. Creeply looked at Jack Robinson's neck, as if it would have afforded him a peculiar gratification to send its owner after his suffering pupil.

"I'm ashamed of you, Mr. Creeply," cried Giaffir's wife, with Fairy in her arms.

"I couldn't have thought it of you, Pa," said Giaffir's eldest daughter. "I'm sure it wasn't her fault."

"But persons—persons without talent or application," and Mr. Creeply tried to look through Jack Robinson, "delight to interrupt the triumphs of genius. Look here, sir—look here!" and Creeply exhibited the epitaph in Persian.

"Ha!" and Jack Robinson took the paper, all eyes attracted by the coolness of his manner. "Ha! very pretty!"

"No doubt," replied old Creeply, with withering sarcasm, "if you could read it."

"Two or three characters here not perfectly finished;" and to the astonishment of his uncle and Shaster, Jack took a pen, and made the necessary additions.

"Oh! what—do you know the character?" observed Creeply.

"Think I do: good night, uncle—good night, aunt: mind—don't let Fairy have her biscuit till she asks properly for it," and without more words, Jack Robinson left the house of uncle Creeply never more to return to it.

"He has no soul to comprehend the beauties of such a

composition," said Miss Tamarisk, the oriental heiress, afterwards married to Xerxes Creeply, her father's consent being obtained by the young man's reputation for Persian. Nay, more; had he so pleased, Xerxes might have held a very important situation in an embassy to Ispahan, at the recommendation of Mr. Shaster, who spoke of him as a person peculiarly fitted for the honour by his knowledge of the language, with his poetical power in the use of it.

It was very strange, however, that Xerxes obstinately refused to search out the hidden beauties of the strains of Saadi; it was —as Mr. Giaffir Creeply would frequently say—quite unaccountable. As for Jack Robinson, it was plain he knew nothing more than the character; or he would have answered the letter written in Persian to him by his forgiving uncle, touched as he was by the rumour of his nephew's desperate fortune.

That letter found Jack in an obscure nook of a lodging. He read it—flung it down. "Why should I trouble myself to please his whims? I could abuse him, if I would, in the slang of a Persian water-carrier: but d—n Persian—I'll give it him in good English;" and Jack's English answer to the oriental missive closed the correspondence between himself and uncle.

"I knew—I knew all he did was a flourish! Correct the character, indeed!" cried Giaffir Creeply; "but no matter; never again does he cross my threshold."

"But, seriously, Mr. Creeply," said his wife, "you never intend to adopt that epitaph?"

"'Twill be beautifully written on parchment—after the eastern fashion," answered Giaffir.

"What! with all that fulsome praise?" asked Mrs. Creeply.

"I see nothing fulsome in it," replied her stoical mate.

"Well—thank Heaven!—if you intend to hang it on your walls, nobody but yourself can read it."

"Yes, madam, but I am not one of those who like to keep knowledge to myself—I shall subjoin a translation to it."

"Mr. Giaffir Creeply, I am sorry I must say—you are a fool."

"Mrs. Giaffir Creeply, it occasions me very much distress to reflect that you are the fool's wife."

On the day that Jack Robinson was warned from his unpaid lodging, the epitaph (without the translation), duly emblazoned, ornamented the dining-room of Giaffir Creeply.

CHAPTER III.

JACK was blessed with a great number of relatives; all easy with the world and with themselves. It was therefore not to be wondered at, that Jack Robinson was looked upon as a scapegrace by the respectable persons of his own blood. Everybody, save his aunt Priscilla, gave him up. "Poor lad!" the maiden would charitably exclaim, "poor lad! he's wild—but he means well."

"Means well! Why doesn't he go abroad, and not disgrace us?" asked aunt Deborah. "I'm told that the fellow really wants a dinner."

"He might, if he will be such a libertine, spare the family, and conceal his name," said aunt Bridget, who, sensitive as she was, might have endured the anonymous starvation of her nephew.

"And he might have done so well, too!" cried aunt Deborah. "Look—only look at Peter and Xerxes," for ever and anon the prosperity of his two respectable cousins was flung in the hungry teeth of Jack Robinson. "You may do as you like, but I shall not go to Twickenham if Jack's of the party." Such was the determination of aunt Deborah. That severe spinster, however, suffered herself to be mollified into consent, and Robinson was permitted to mingle among a dozen of his aunts, uncles, and cousins, in an aquatic excursion up the Thames, to visit Mr. Pope's villa.

The day was beautiful—even Deborah was in tolerably good temper—and everything promised a most delightful excursion.

"John, you know 'Pope's Essay on Man.' If you would but recite some of it—I recollect you spoke it once at the holidays."

"I know I did, aunt; once is enough, isn't it?" asked Jack of aunt Priscilla; and he turned to talk to a blue-eyed cousin, until that day unnoticed by our hero.

"You are very gallant, Mr. Robinson," observed aunt Priscilla, with wounded dignity, taking out a very handsome gold box.

"Bless me! Miss Robinson," said a new female friend, "that's a beautiful box."

"Hush, child!" cried Priscilla, and then in a still lower voice, and with little preface, the elderly maiden proceeded to tell the history of the treasure. "Ha! my dear—you can't think how I value this box. It was given to me—but no matter for names

—we were to have been married, child, but before that could happen, he died, dear youth! upon the bed of glory."

"Dreadful disappointment!" said the sympathising listener.

"Yes, my dear; he gave it me when we parted, and placing it in my hand, he said—ha!" and aunt Priscilla shrieked loud enough to raise Father Thames from the bottom.

"What's the matter?" was the general shout.

"My box—my box!" screamed aunt Priscilla, and wrung her empty hands above the river. The truth is, aunt Deborah—she was the heaviest of a very heavy family—was seated next to Priscilla, and turning suddenly round, her arm striking the hand of the possessor of the box, at that time more intent upon its history than its preservation, jerked the valuable love-gift into the water.

"What's to be done?" cried every uncle, every aunt, and every cousin, save aunt Priscilla, who was speechless, and cousin Jack, who whistled.

"John—John Robinson—you—you can dive?" exclaimed Deborah, very significantly.

"Better drag for it," said Robinson, with, as all the aunts declared, "the most brutal unconcern."

"But—you know, Mr. Robinson, that you are a very expert swimmer. I'm sure you can get the box," cried aunt Bridget.

"'Tisn't worth a guinea," said Robinson.

"Don't talk to me of its worth, sir!" exclaimed aunt Priscilla, with considerable indignation; and then, throwing her arms round the neck of her friend, she sobbed—"I had rather lost half I'm possessed of."

Aunt Priscilla resolved to land, and to offer any reward for the recovery of her property. Peter Creeply, who was of the party, begged that his aunt would leave the business entirely to him—he would forfeit her love for ever, if he did not bring her back the box. The lady comforted by the confident manner of her nephew, blessed him, and bade him use his best discretion. The party landed, when Jack Robinson fell in with a couple of town friends, and—the vivacity of his own party being extinguished, everybody looking sorrowful in compliment to the loss of Priscilla—he resolved to dine with his new companions. "I should only be in your way," said Jack, "for, upon my word, try as hard as I can, I can't weep for a snuff-box; and it's a pity to spoil company, when everybody else is of one mind. I say, Peter, do you hear nothing? Hark!"

"Hark, Mr. Robinson! To what?"

"There, again," said Jack Robinson; "the fishes! how they do sneeze to be sure!" Thus spoke Jack, to the great disgust

of many of his dearest relatives, and lounged off between his London comrades, to take, as had been stipulated, "a reasonable glass."

There are, doubtless, critical stages in the life of man and woman, when any undue agitation of the spirits may have the most fatal effects on the tenement of clay. We will not positively assert that it is so, but trust that the choleric will, for their own sake, if not out of regard to the quiet of others, believe it to be very possible. Now, whether the temporary loss of Miss Priscilla's box—for we may at once state that it was in a few hours restored to her—chained as that box was to the dearest fibres of her heart, and then, by violent disruption, cast away—opened wounds, not well healed, and never again to close—or whether her time was nearly done, and the separation of the gold snuff-box had nothing whatever to do with the tragedy that followed—we leave to higher wits to decide. It is, however, a part of our task to inform the reader that aunt Priscilla sickened, and in one month after her trip to Twickenham died.

"You must get something, now, Jack; you were her favourite," said young Corkton, a bottle friend of Jack's.

"Poor old girl!" said Jack. "I think she was the only one of them who cared about me. And I didn't use her well—I wasn't as attentive as I might have been. Poor old Priscilla!"

"Death must come, Jack. He's an ugly fellow, to be sure; but when the skull and cross-bones are well gilt, they're not so bad. I suppose, now, you'll keep your hunters and pack? Egad! you're a lucky fellow—there's such a bargain in the way of hounds."

"We shall see, Tom," said Robinson; who in due time was summoned to the funeral: and the ceremony over, to the reading of aunt Priscilla's will. Jack Robinson found himself down for ten thousand pounds. "Excellent aunt!" ejaculated Robinson, about to weep at the benevolence of the deceased, when he was desired to attend to the reading of a codicil, that transferred the ten thousand pounds to John Robinson, to "my beloved nephew Peter Creeply, together with my gold snuff-box, in token of his courageous recovery of the same."

"So, Peter," said Jack Robinson, meeting him a week afterwards, "so, Peter, I wish you joy of your fortune—didn't know you could swim. 'Twas all my own fault; you attended to the wishes of the old lady, and I—well. I deserve my loss. But I didn't know you could dive!"

"Dive, Jack! not I; dive! not a bit of it."

"Why, doesn't the will say as much? 'Courageous conduct'—how did you get the box? For my part, you know, I went

away with Corkton and Springley, and we got *so* drunk! But how did it happen?"

"I think—for she wasn't quite herself, poor woman—that my dear aunt believed I had risked my life to fish up her box. Not I, Jack, depend on't," and Peter, assured of the ten thousand pounds, could afford to be candid. "The truth is, it struck me that it was possible, when the tide went down, that the box might be found in the mud. So keeping my thoughts to myself, and persuading my aunt to depend entirely upon me—ha! ha! —whilst you were with Corkton and Springley, I went at night and sat on the bank of the river."

"I see—and while, like a fool, I was laughing and swallowing wine"——

"I was watching the going down of the tide," answered Peter, and he grinned at the recollection of his cunning.

"Well, I was a fool," exclaimed Jack Robinson—"I was a fool! I could have dived and brought up the box; I was a fool!"

Pity it is that those fitted to seize a treasure from any depth should leave it unregarded, a prize for the patient lookers out who can do nothing more than watch the "going down of the tide."

CHAPTER IV.

Jack Robinson was now without a friend. It was not enough that he had forfeited the intended legacy of aunt Priscilla, but he lost with the ten thousand pounds the little credit he had with his relations; whilst Peter Creeply, from the moment the tenor of the maiden's will was known, rose in the estimation of all the world. There never was such a graceless good-for-nothing as Jack Robinson! There could not be a finer gentleman or a better man than Peter Creeply.

Poor Robinson, the victim of early impressions, capable of doing twenty things better than seven-tenths of his fellows, did nothing for that very reason. He sank in reputation, health, and spirits; and at forty, behold Jack Robinson in a garret, when, with the fair use of his talents and moderate fortune to back them, the same Jack Robinson might have been the lord of a rich manor—the useful member for the borough.

"Mr. Robinson, Mr. Robinson," cried his landlady, stealing unheard by him into his wretched attic, where Jack sat, with his head in his hand, staring at an empty grate.

"Oh! what's the matter, Mrs. Carey?" asked Robinson.

"Do you know, the very thing has happened that will suit you. You said, last Friday, you should like to get a school. Now, this morning, the parish schoolmaster died. A comfortable place, sir, for them as likes the business: house, coals, candles, and I don't know what salary," said the landlady.

"I'll see about it immediately, Mrs. Carey," said Robinson, starting up and taking his hat.

"Stay, Mr. Robinson; I tell you what has come into my head. There's Mr. Quick, the whip-maker, a kind soul—my boy will show you where he lives—go to him, he's overseer, vestryman, and a great person in the parish. Get his interest, and I'm bound for it you have the place. Here Jemmy," and Mrs. Carey desired her boy to see Mr. Robinson to Mr. Quick's, the whip-maker.

In a few minutes the child pointed out the door of the vestryman, and returned home. Robinson paused a moment, and was about to go into the shop, when a gentleman passed him, and was about to enter: their eyes met, and for a moment they stared at each other.

"Surely," said the gentleman, "your name is—is Robinson?"

"And surely," said Jack, "I see my old schoolfellow, Brown?"

"How odd that we should meet after so many years!" said Brown. "But come in, I lodge with Mr. Quick."

"That's strange! I had something to ask of him," said Robinson.

"Out of town, and won't return until to-morrow. Come in; stay, Jack, we shall be more comfortable at a coffee-house—come along," and the schoolfellows took their way to a neighbouring house, where Brown played the host. "And how have you been, Jack? Though not rich yourself, you had an army of rich friends: I hope they've not left you poor, eh!" and Brown unconsciously glanced at the whitened edges of Robinson's coat.

"No—no—I ought to be rich—but I blame no one," said Robinson. "However, to my business—you can serve me, Brown."

"I shall be delighted to do it, Robinson," and Brown pledged his schoolfellow. "Come, drink; you shall have as much wine as you can swim in. Ha! talking of swimming, have you ever met with Jones? Do you recollect the flogging our master—wonder if he's dead yet—gave us three? Poor Smith! he'd have made a bright man! Pretty boy he was, you recollect—I see him now, just as he was picked out of the water—poor Smith! But you say I can serve you—speak, my boy."

"Have you any interest with Mr. Quick?" asked Robinson.

"Do anything in the world for me," answered Brown.

"I understand he has great influence in the vestry; the appointment of the new schoolmaster rests with that body. I—I"—Robinson felt his cheeks creep with blushes—"I think you can answer for my capability—will you ask Mr. Quick to stir himself in my behalf? It is of consequence to me, Brown," said Robinson stammeringly.

Brown looked confused—thoughtful. He drew himself up to his schoolmate, and laid his hand on Robinson's knee. "My good fellow, for old times, I should be most happy to serve you—I should indeed, John; but the truth is, I never in all my life asked a favour of Quick, and as I never did ask, I—you see—I"—and Brown with dropped jaw, stared at Robinson.

"Say no more—I beg your pardon," said Robinson, and he rose, and, incapable of self-control, rushed into the street, leaving Brown ("who couldn't swim") bewildered and ashamed.

The next day, Robinson called at Quick's house, and learned that he had not yet arrived from the borough of ——, where he had a vote, which he had journeyed to give to Squire Jones, of Homepickle Hall. The election, however, was over, and the next day Mr. Quick would be at home.

"Jones—Squire Jones—of Homepickle Hall," mused Robinson; and as the member was confined by a political fit of the gout to London, Robinson was resolved to wait upon him, for he recognised his old schoolfellow in the new-made senator. "It's hard, indeed, if I don't find him a little warmer than that nincompoop, Brown," thought Robinson, as he knocked at the door, and prayed an audience of the Squire.

We pass the meeting of the schoolfellows—the protestations of service on the part of Jones. "He would immediately see his friendly constituent, Quick, and secure the office of pedagogue for Jack Robinson; Jack might rely upon it."

Before the election came on, Robinson waited upon Mr. Quick, and communicated to him his hopes and pretensions." "Mr. Jones, the member for ——, you know Mr. Jones?" asked Robinson.

"O, yes!" replied Mr. Quick, "very intimately!"

"He promised to see you on the business—he has doubtless"——

"Not at all—never see him—never heard from him—very sorry, indeed," interrupted Mr. Quick.

"Good-morning, sir—good-morning," cried Robinson, disgusted, sick at heart; and he hurried home to his miserable lodging, where he wrote a letter to the parliamentary member, upbraiding him, in scorching words, with his broken promise.

The next morning, Mr. Jones's footman brought back a missive from the senator, in which he "assured Mr. Robinson that he (Mr. J.) had not forgotten him; on the contrary, he (Mr. J.) had personally called at Mr. Quick's house; and not finding him at home, had left his (Mr. J.'s) business with the little boy, which Mr. Jones considered to be 'going quite far enough!'"

A week afterwards, the election took place. Robinson, in utter hopelessness, addressed the board, soliciting the appointment. The day after the election, Mrs. Carey, with unusual smiles, informed her lodger that an old man from —— vestry had a letter for him.

"An old man?" asked Robinson, listlessly.

"From the workhouse: poor man! he's something of a scholar, and has seen better days."

"A scholar! the workhouse! and that will be my fate," muttered Robinson.

"Here he comes, sir," said Mrs. Carey, as she heard the old man shambling up the stairs.

The man crawled into the garret. His back was bent as with a hundred years, and he spoke in hissing, whistling tones. "I've brought a letter—hem! hem!—a letter—from the vestry—hem! There's good luck in it, I know—you're elected schoolmaster."

The old man spoke truly. For once, a vestry had been won by literature—the intelligent style of Robinson had secured his election. Robinson was to appear before the board the next day to receive his appointment.

"I—I was a schoolmaster once myself," said the old man.

"You!" sighed Robinson, as he gazed upon the human wretchedness before him.

"Yes—I—I hope as I've brought you good news, you'll give me something to drink—*nunc est bibendum*—hem! hem!—I kept —— house at ——"

"Good God!" exclaimed Robinson, "you are"—he said no more, but, holding one hand before his eyes, he with the other motioned to Mrs. Carey to lead away the old man, who was no other than "Jones, Brown, and Robinson's" flogging schoolmaster. The original cause of his fall was never fully known, but it was whispered that the pedagogue had been convicted of embezzling the pocket-money of his scholars.

Robinson had compassed his wish. He could next day insure himself a decent competence. Therefore, at the hour the vestry met to confer the appointment, their chosen schoolmaster lay day-dreaming in his garret bed. His few remaining years were the years of a vagabond.

Such is the life of Brown who "couldn't swim;" of Jones who could "swim a little;" and of the capable Robinson who could "swim anywhere."

He who was flogged for learning, lived and died a dunce; he who knew little, learned no more; and he who knew all things, had this precept scourged into his blood—to make use of none.

"THE 'BIRCH' IS FATHER OF THE MAN!'

SHAKSPEARE AT "BANK-SIDE."*

THE bell of St. Mary Overy had struck three; the flag was just displayed from the Rose playhouse; and, rustling in the wind, was like, in the words of the pious Philip Stubbes, "unto a false harlot, flaunting the unwary onward to destruction and to death." Barges and boats, filled with the flower of the court-end and the city, crowded to the bridge. Gallants, in the pride of new cloak and doublet, leaped to the shore, making rich the strand with many a fair gentlewoman lifted all tenderly from the craft; horses pranced along Bank-side, spurred by their riders to the door of the tiring-room; nay, there was no man, woman, or child, who did not seem beckoned by the Rose-flag to the play,—whose ears did not drink in the music of the trumpets, as though it was the most ravishing sound of the earth. At length the trumpets ceased, and the play began.

The Rose was crammed. In the penny gallery was many an apprentice unlawfully dispensing his master's time—it might be, his master's penny, too. Many a husband, slunk from a shrew's pipe and hands, was there, to list and shake the head at the player's tale of wedded love. Nor here and there was wanting, peeping from a nook, with cap pulled over the brow, and ruff huddled about the neck, the sly, happy face of one, who yesterday gave an assenting groan to the charitable wonder of a godly neighbour—of one, who marvelled that the Rose-flag should flout the heavens, yet call not down the penal fire. The yard was thronged; and on the stage was many a bird of courtly feather, perched on his sixpenny stool; whilst the late

* According to Rowe's story, related to Pope, Shakspeare's first employment in London was to wait at the door of the playhouse, and hold the horses of those that had no servants, that they might be ready after the performance. "But I cannot," says Mr. Steevens, "dismiss this anecdote without observing, that it seems to want every mark of probability."

comer lay at length upon the rushes, his thoughts wrested from his hose and points by the mystery of the play.

Happy, thrice happy wights, thus fenced and rounded in from the leprous, eating cares of life! Happy ye, who even with a penny piece, can transport yourselves into a land of fairy—can lull the pains of flesh with the music of high thoughts! The play goes on, with all its influences. Where is the courtier? Ten thousand miles from the glassy floor of a palace, lying on a bank, listening to a reed piping in Arcady. Where the man of thrift? He hath shuffled off his trading suit, and dreams himself a shepherd of the golden time. Where the wife-ridden husband, doubtful of a natural right to his own soul? He is an Indian Emperor, flushed with the mastery of ten thousand slaves! Where is the poor apprentice—he, who hath weals upon his back for twopence lost on Wednesday? He is in El Dorado, strutting upon gold. Thus works the play—let it go on. Our business calls us to the outside.

There is scarcely a passenger to be seen on Bank-side. Three or four boys loiter about the theatre, some trying, through a deceitful crevice, to catch a glimpse of the play—some tending horses, until the show be done. Apart from these, his arms crossed, leaning against a post, his eyes fixed on the Rose-flag,—stands a youth, whose face, though perfect in its beauty, has yet a troubled air. As he stands, watching the rustling beacon, it almost seems—so fixed is his look—as though he held some converse with it; as though the fortunes of his future life were woven in its web in mystic characters, and he with his spirit straining from his eyes, were seeking to decipher them. Now—so would imagination work—there seemed voluble speech in its flapping folds, and now a visible face. The youth turned from gazing on the flag, to the open river. Some spirit was upon him; and, through his eyes, gave to vulgar objects a new and startling form. He was in a day-dream of wonder and beauty: and, as it is told, that those doomed to the ocean with hearts yearning for the land, see fields and pleasant gardens in the heaving wave,—so our hero, tricked by his errant fancy, gazed breathless at new wonders sweeping before him. A golden mist shrouded the mansions and warehouses on the strand. Each common thing of earth glowed and dilated under the creative spirit of the dreamer. The Thames seemed fixed—whilst a thousand forms moved along the silver pavement. The sky shone brighter—harmony was in the air! The shades move on.

First passes one, bearing in his hand a skull: wisdom is in his eyes, music on his tongue—the soul of contemplation in the flesh

of an Apollo: the greatest wonder and the deepest truth—the type of great thoughts and sickly fancies—the arm of clay, wrestling with, and holding down, the angel. He looks at the skull, as though death had written on it the history of man. In the distance, one white arm is seen above the tide, clutching at the branches of a willow "growing askant a brook."

Now, there are sweet, fitful noises in the air: a shaggy monster, his lips glued to a bottle—his eyes scarlet with wine—wine throbbing in the very soles of his feet—heaves and rolls along, mocked at by a sparkling creature, couched in a cowslip's bell.

And now a maiden and a youth, an eternity of love in their passionate looks, with death as a hooded priest, joining their hands: a gay gallant follows them, led on by Queen Mab, twisting and sporting as a porker's tail.

The horns sound—all, all is sylvan! Philosophy, in hunter's suit, stretched beneath an oak, moralises on a wounded deer, festering, neglected and alone: and now, the bells of folly jingle in the breeze, and the suit of motley glances among the greenwood.

The earth is blasted—the air seems full of spells: the shadows of the fates darken the march of the conqueror: the hero is stabbed with air-drawn steel.

The waves roar like lions round the cliff: the winds are up, and howling: yet there is a voice, louder than theirs—a voice made high and piercing by intensest agony! The singer comes, his white head "crowned with rank fumitor"—madness, tended by truth, speaking through folly!

The Adriatic basks in the sun: there is a street in Venice; "a merry bargain" is struck—the Jew slinks like a balked tiger from the court.

Enter a pair of legs, marvellously cross gartered.

And, hark! to a sound of piping, comes one with an ass's head wreathed with musk-roses and a spirit playing around it like a wildfire.

A handkerchief, with "magic in the web" comes, like a trail of light, and disappears.

A leek—a leek of immortal green shoots up!

Behold! like to the San Trinidad, swims in a buck-basket, labelled "to Datchet meads."

There gleam two roses, red and white—a Roman cloak stabbed through and through—a lantern of the watch of Messina!

A thousand images of power and beauty pass along.

The glorious pageant is over—no! fancy is yet at work.—

Yonder ship, laden with sherries, canary, and spice—see how

her masts and rigging fall and melt, like metal in a furnace! Her huge hold, stowed to the deck with wine, swells and distends, and takes another form. We see no ship, but a man mountain, with a belly that "would sink a navy." One butt of red wine is sinking in the Thames: no; it moves and shapes itself into something like a nose, which, rising like a comet fiery red before him of the abdomen, seems as 'twere purposed for a torch, to light him "'twixt tavern and tavern." And see—

But the day-dream of the youth is broken. A visitor, mounted, has just arrived, and would fain enter the playhouse; but there is none bold or strong enough to hold his steed. At least a dozen men—it was remarkable, that each had in his bosom a roll of paper, it might be the draught of a play—rushing from the Rose, strove to hold the bridle: but some the horse trod down—some he struck paralytic with his flashing eye—some ran away, half distraught at his terrible neighing. At length our dreamer approached the steed, which as it had been suddenly turned to stone, stood still. The rider dismounted, and entered the playhouse, leaving his horse tended by our hero. The animal ate from out his hand—answered with its proud head, the caresses of its feeder—and, as it pranced and curveted, a sound of music, as from the horny hoofs of dancing satyrs, rose from the earth. All stood amazed at the sudden taming of the horse.

The play ended—the audience issued from the doors. The story had run from mouth to mouth, touching the new-comer and his horse. All hurried about the stranger, to see him mount. He, with some difficulty, such was the crowd, leaped on his steed, when, inclining his face radiant with smiles towards the youth who had performed the office of his groom, he flashed like a sunbeam, out of sight. All stood marble with astonishment. At length, the immortal quality of the visitor was made manifest, for, in the press and hurry, a feather had fallen from one of his wings—albeit, concealed and guarded by a long cloak.

The youth who had taken charge of the horse, seized, as his rightful wages, on this relic of Phœbus, and, taking his way, he fashioned it into a pen, and with it from time to time, gave to the "airy nothings" of his day-dream, "a local habitation and a name."

It is modestly hoped, that this well-authenticated story will wholly silence the sceptical objections of Mr. Steevens.

THE WINE CELLAR.

A "MORALITY."

STEPHEN CURLEW was a thrifty goldsmith in the reign of the Second Charles. His shop was a mine of metal: he worked for the court, although, we fear, his name is not to be found in any record in the State-Paper Office. Stephen was a bachelor, and, what is strange, he never felt, that is, he never complained of, his loneliness. His chased ewers, his embossed goblets, his gold in bars, were to him wife and children. Midas was his only kinsman. He would creep among his treasures, like an old gray rat, and rub his hands, and smile, as if communing with the wealth about him. He had so long hugged gold to his heart, that it beat for nothing else. Stephen was a practical philosopher; for he would meekly take the order—nay, consult the caprice—of the veriest popinjay with the humility of a pauper, when, at a word, he might have outblazoned lords and earls. If this be not real philosophy, thought Stephen, as he walked slip-shod at the heels of his customers, what is?

Stephen was a man of temperance. He was content to see venison carved on his hunting-cups; he cared not to have it in his larder. His eyes would melt at clustering grapes chased on banquet goblets; but no drop of the living juice passed the goldsmith's lips. Stephen only gave audience to Bacchus when introduced by Plutus. Such was the frugality of Stephen to his sixty-fifth year; and then, or his name had not been eternised in this our page, temptation fell upon him.

It was eight o'clock, on a raw spring evening, and Stephen sat alone in his back room. There was no more fire upon the hearth than might have lain in a tinder-box, but Stephen held his parchment hands above it, and would not be cold. A small silver lamp, with a short wick—for the keen observation of Stephen had taught him the scientific truth, that the less the wick, the less the waste of oil—glowed, a yellow speck in the

darkness. On the table lay a book, a treatise on precious stones; and on Stephen's knee, "Hermes, the True Philosopher." Stephen was startled from a waking dream by a loud and hasty knocking at the door. Mike, the boy, was out, but it could not be he. Stephen took up the lamp, and was creeping to the door, when his eye caught the silver, and he again placed it upon the table, and felt his way through the shop. Unbolting the five bolts of the door, but keeping fast the chain, Stephen demanded "who was there?"

"I bear a commission from Sir William Brouncker, and I'm in haste."

"Stay you a minute—but a minute;" and Stephen hurried back for the lamp, then hastily returned, opened the door, and the visitor passed the threshold.

"'Tis not Charles," cried Stephen, alarmed at his mistake, for he believed he had heard the voice of Sir William's man.

"No matter for that, Stephen; you work for men, and not for Christian names. Come, I have a job for you;" and the visitor, with the easy, assured air of a gallant, lounged into the back parlour, followed by the tremulous Stephen.

"Sir William"—— began the goldsmith.

"He bade me use his name; the work I'd have you do is for myself. Fear not; here's money in advance," and the stranger plucked from his pocket a purse, which, in its ample length lay like a bloated snake upon the table.

Stephen smiled and said, "Your business, sir?"

"See here," and the stranger moved the lamp immediately between them, when, for the first time, Stephen clearly saw the countenance of his customer. His face was red as brick, and his eyes looked deep as the sea, and glowed with good humour. His mouth was large and frank; and his voice came as from the well of truth. His hair fell in curls behind his ears, and his moustache, black as coal, made a perfect crescent on his lip, the points upwards. Other men may be merely good fellows, the stranger seemed the best. "See here," he repeated, and produced a drawing on a small piece of paper, "can you cut me this in a seal ring?"

"Humph!" and Stephen put on his spectacles, "the subject is"——

"Bacchus squeezing grape-juice into the cup of Death," said the stranger.

"An odd conceit," cried the goldsmith.

"We all have our whims, or woe to the sellers," said the customer. "Well, can it be done?"

"Surely, sir, surely. On what shall it be cut?"

"An emerald, nothing less. It is the drinker's stone. In a week, Master Curlew?"

"This day week, sir, if I live in health."

The day came, Stephen was a tradesman of his word, and the stranger sat in the back parlour, looking curiously into the ring.

"*Per Bacco!* Rarely done. Why, Master Curlew, thou hast caught the very chops of glorious Liber; his swimming eyes, and blessed mouth. Ha! ha! thou hast put thy heart into the work, Master Curlew; and how cunningly hast thou all but hid the dart of Death behind the thyrsus of the god. How his life-giving hand clutches the pulpy cluster, and with what a gush comes down the purple rain, plashing into rubies in the cup of Mors!"

"It was my wish to satisfy, most noble sir," said Stephen, meekly; somewhat confounded by the loud praises of the speaker.

"May you never be choked with a grape-stone, Master Curlew, for this goodly work. Ha!" and the speaker looked archly at the withered goldsmith; "it hath cost thee many a headache ere thou couldst do this."

"If I may say it, I have laboured hard at the craft—have been a thrifty, sober man," said Stephen.

"Sober! Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the speaker, and his face glowed redder, and his eyes melted; "sober! why, thou wast begot in a wine cask, and suckled by a bottle, or thou hadst never done this. By the thigh of Jupiter! he who touched this," and the stranger held up the ring to his eye, and laughed again, "he who touched this, hath never known water. Tut! man, were I to pink thee with a sword, thou'dst bleed wine!"

"I," cried Stephen, "I bleed;" and he glanced fearfully towards the door, and then at the stranger, who continued to look at the ring.

"The skin of the sorriest goat shall sometimes hold the choicest liquor," said the stranger, looking into the dry face of the goldsmith. "Come, confess, art thou not a sly roisterer? Or art thou a hermit over thy drops, and dost count flasks alone? Ay! ay! well, to thy cellar, man; and,—yes,—thine arms are long enough,—bring up ten bottles of thy choicest Malaga."

"I!—my cellar!—Malaga!" stammered Stephen.

"Surely thou hast a cellar?" and the stranger put his hat upon the table with the air of a man set in for a carouse.

"For forty years, but it hath never known wine," cried the goldsmith. "I—I have never known wine." The stranger said nothing; but turning full upon Stephen, and placing his hands upon his knees, he blew out his flushing cheeks like a bagpipe, and sat with his eyes blazing upon the heretic. "No, never!"

gasped Stephen, terrified, for a sense of his wickedness began to possess him.

"And dost thou repent?" asked the stranger, with a touch of mercy towards the sinner.

"I—humph! I'm a poor man," cried Curlew; "yes, though I'm a goldsmith, and seem rich, I—I'm poor! poor!"

"Well 'tis lucky I come provided;" and the stranger placed upon the table a couple of flasks. Whether he took them from under his cloak, or drew them through the floor, Stephen knew not; but he started at them as they stood rebukingly upon his table, as if they had been two sheeted ghosts. "Come, glasses," cried the giver of the wine.

"Glasses!" echoed Stephen, "in my house!"

"Right, glasses! No—cups, and let them be gold ones,"—and the bacchanal, for it was plain he was such, waved his arm with an authority which Stephen attempted not to dispute, but rose, and hobbled into the shop, and returned with two cups, just as the first cork was drawn. "Come there's sunlight in that, eh?" cried the stranger, as he poured the wine into the vessels. "So, thou hast never drunk wine? Well, here's to the baptism of thy heart." And the stranger emptied the cup, and his lips smacked like a whip.

And Stephen Curlew tasted the wine, and looked around, below, above; and the oaken wainscot did not split in twain, nor did the floor yawn, nor the ceiling gape. Stephen tasted a second time; thrice did he drink, and he licked his mouth as a cat licks the cream from her whiskers, and putting his left hand upon his belly, softly sighed.

"Ha! ha! another cup? I know thou wilt," and Stephen took another, and another; and the two flasks were in brief time emptied. They were, however, speedily followed by two more, placed by the stranger on the table, Stephen opening his eyes and mouth at their mysterious appearance. The contents of these were duly swallowed, and lo! another two stood before the goldsmith, or, as he then thought, four.

"There never was such a Bacchus!" cried Stephen's customer, eyeing the ring. "Why, a man may see his stomach fairly heave, and his cheek ripen with wine; yet, till this night, thou hadst never tasted the juice? What—what could have taught thee to carve the god so capitally?"

"Instinct—instinct," called out the goldsmith, his lips turned to clay by too much wine.

"And yet," said the stranger, "I care not so much for—How old art thou, Stephen?"

"Sixty-five," and Stephen hiccuped.

"I care not so much for thy Death, Stephen; instinct should have made thee a better hand at Death."

"'Tis a good Death," cried the goldsmith, with unusual boldness, "a most sweet Death."

"'Tis too broad—the skeleton of an alderman with the flesh dried upon him. He hath not the true desolation—the ghastly nothingness of the big bugbear. No matter; I'm content; but this I'll say, though thou hast shown thyself a professor at Bacchus, thou art yet but a poor apprentice at Death."

Stephen Curlew answered not with words, but he snored very audibly. How long he slept he could not well discover; but when he awoke, he found himself alone; no, not alone, there stood upon the table an unopened flask of wine. In a moment the mystery broke upon him—and he sprang to his feet with a shriek, and rushed into the shop. No, he had not been drugged by thieves—all was as it should be. The stranger, like an honest and a courteous man, had taken but his own; and, without disturbing the sleeper, had quitted the house. And Stephen Curlew, the wine glowing in his heart—yea down to his very nails, stood and smiled at the unopened flask before him.

Stephen continued to eye the flask; and though its donor had shared with him he knew not how many bottles, Stephen was resolved that not one drop of the luscious juice before him should wet an alien throat. But how—where to secure it? For in the new passion which seized upon the goldsmith, the one flask seemed to him more precious than the costly treasure in his shop—a thing to be guarded with more scrupulous affection—more jealous love. In what nook of his house to hide the glorious wealth—what corner, where it might escape the profane glances and itching fingers of his workmen? The thought fell in a golden flash upon him—the cellar—ay, the cellar! Who of his household ever thought of approaching the cellar? Stephen seized the flask and lamp, and paused. The cellar had no lock! no matter; he had a bag of three-inch nails and a stout hammer.

The next morning, neighbours met at the closed door and windows of the goldsmith, and knocked and shouted—shouted and knocked. They were, however, reduced to a crowbar, and, at length, burst into the house. Every place was searched, but there was nowhere visible old Stephen Curlew. Days passed on, and strange stories filled the ears of men. One neighbour vowed that he had had a dream or vision, he knew not which, wherein he saw the goldsmith whirled down the Strand in a chariot drawn by a lion and a tiger, and driven by a half-naked young man, wearing a panther skin, and on his head vine-leaves and ivy. An old woman swore that she had seen Stephen carried

away by a dozen devils (very much in liquor), with red faces and goat legs. However, in less than a month, the goldsmith's nephew, a scrivener's clerk, took possession of Curlew's wealth, and became a new-made butterfly with golden wings. As for Stephen, after various speculations, it was concluded to the satisfaction of all parties, that he must have been carried away by Satan himself, and the nephew cared not to combat popular opinions. But such, in truth, was not the end of the goldsmith. Hear it.

Stephen, possessed by the thought of the cellar, with the one flask, a lamp, nails and hammer, proceeded to the sacred crypt. He arrived in the vault, and having kissed the flask, reverently put it down, and straightway addressed himself to the work. Closing the door, he drove the first nail, the second, third; and borrowing new strength from the greatness of his purpose, he struck each nail upon the head with the force and precision of a Cyclops, burying it deep in the oak. With this new-found might, he drove eleven nails; the twelfth was between his thumb and finger, when looking round,—oh! sad mishap, heavy mischance! awful error!—he had driven the nails from the wrong side!—In a word, he had nailed himself in! There he stood, and there stood the flask. He gasped with horror; his foot stumbled, struck the lamp, it fell over, and the light went out.

Shall we write further on the agony of Stephen Curlew? Shall we describe how he clawed and struck at the door, now in the hope to wrench a nail, and now to alarm the breathing men above? No; we will not dwell upon the horror; it is enough that the fate of the goldsmith was dimly shadowed forth in the following paragraph of last Saturday.

"Some labourers, digging a foundation near"—no, we will not name the place, for the family of the Curlews is not yet extinct, and there may be descendants in the neighbourhood—"near——, found a skeleton; a hammer was beside it, with several long nails: a small wine-flask was also found near the remains, which it is considered, could not have been in the vault in which they were discovered, less than a century and three-quarters!"

Oh, ye heads of families—and oh, ye thrifty, middle-aged bachelors, boarding with families, or growing mouldy by yourselves, never, while ye live, forget the terrible end of Stephen Curlew. And oh, ye heads of families—and oh, ye aforesaid bachelors, albeit ye have only one bottle left, never—NEVER NAIL UP THE WINE-CELLAR!

KIND COUSIN TOM.

Poor Jack Martin! Nay, we do him grievous wrong—for he was not poor; but rich, imperial, in his simple honesty. He wanted—excellent want!—a sense of poverty. He wore a whole coat—had rarely a fracture in his shoe—slept under a roof of nights, and could sometime boast of five shillings in his pocket. Hence, Jack—ignorant Jack!—never dreamt of any worldly difference between himself and Tom Martin; his prosperous, and most ambitious cousin. "God bless you! he didn't see me," Jack would say to a companion, when having nodded, with a twinkling eye to Tom, the nod was unreturned, Tom quickening his pace, and looking into the sky, to avoid his pauper cousin. "Depend on't he never saw me—bless you!—one of the best fellows in the world; always so pleased to see me." And such was Jack's innocent belief: he could not understand that Tom—his old schoolfellow, his blood relation Tom—took any glory to himself from the seven hundred a-year, and the very genteel acquaintance acquired by the grace of such an income, to the disadvantage of cousin Jack—good-tempered, merry-hearted Jack; who, we may observe, defied fortune with seventy-five pounds per annum; terrible odds; the more especially, when increased by the addition of one wife and two children. Jack enjoyed—may we say as much—a small clerkship, and seemed one of the many whom fortune forgets either for good or evil. Years and years passed, and Jack Martin was only a poor clerk.

Tom Martin was not to be so overlooked. He attacked fortune with a boldness, a laughing confidence, which, when successful, is considered the certain evidence of genius: if it fail, it is rashness, ignorance, gross presumption. Jack and Tom started in life from the same point: Jack crept a step or two and then stuck fast: whilst Tom took ogre's strides into the pleasant places of the world. At times they met, or rather passed each

other; nothing inducing Jack to suspect that there was the slightest distinction between them—that Tom, except from a growing defect of vision, could have failed to see him. "Poor fellow! he always used to be dim-sighted," Jack would say; "but bless me! how very fast he walks. Capital fellow, cousin Tom—always very fond of me."

It was, in truth, an annoyance to Tom, that his extraordinary position in the world—his increasing reputation in the market, was wholly unacknowledged by his vulgar cousin Jack; who saw cousin Tom—and would have seen only cousin Tom, had he been clothed in cloth of gold, and dubbed a knight. There was the same laugh—the same gripe of the hand—when Tom found impossible to avoid the grasp—the same kind salutation as in former years. Tom, when confronted by Jack, seemed humiliated by his very heartiness: his robust welcome awoke a recollection of former annoyance. Jack rose before the prosperous Tom the ghost of departed poverty.

"What an excellent fellow, is my cousin Tom!" said Jack, warm from one of these meetings, to a brother clerk—a fellow vassal—in the office of Smith and Smith.

"What's he done, Jack?" asked his friend.

"Oh, he's done nothing," replied Jack; "but he's a fine fellow! So anxious about me."

"Well, I am happy to hear it. I suppose he promises something, then?"

"Not at all; but he has given me capital advice. Tom was always fond of me."

"Advice? And shall you take it, eh, Jack?" asked his companion.

"I can't say I shall; but, poor fellow! he meant it well—a good-hearted creature! I'll tell you all about it. You see this morning, as I was going along Cheapside, I met Tom between Alderman Poger and Snarl the common-councilman. 'What! cousin Tom,' says I, and caught hold of his hand—'how are you? How are you, cousin Tom?'"

"And what said the alderman and"——

"Oh, they nodded and laughed to Tom, and no doubt, thinking I'd something particular to say to my cousin, they dropped his arm, and walked on."

"And was your cousin," asked Jack's friend drily, "very much pleased at the meeting?"

"To be sure he was—hav'n't I told you, Tom was always so fond of me?"

"Well, and his advice?"

"Why, he asked me to walk down Gutter-lane with him; and

when we had gone a little way, he stopped, and looking at me in his kind, good way, he said, 'Cousin John,'"——

"John!"

"'Say Jack,' says I, "'cousin Tom—no John between relations—Jack as always.'—'Jack,' says he, 'what's your present salary?'—'Now ninety pounds a-year,' says I. 'It's very little,' says he, and I couldn't deny it; 'very little for a man of your talents.'—'Why,' says I, 'not to say much about talents, I've known greater fools get a good deal more; but never mind that.'—'And you've a wife and two children?' says he. 'Ha! you've never come and taken a bit with us,' says I, 'as you promised: cousin Sally would be so happy'—'Well, I will come,' says he; 'but now to business. A wife and two children,' says he. 'Between you and me,' says I, 'there's flannel wanted for a third.'—'It's a great pity,' says he. 'Can't be helped,' says I. 'However,' says Tom, 'this makes the matter more urgent. Cousin Jack, you're wasting your abilities in England—you are, indeed,' and, poor fellow, he seemed quite concerned as he spoke. 'What would you have me do, then?' says I. 'Do!' says he, 'why, I wouldn't have you stop another week in London! If you want to be a man—they're the words of a friend, Jack,'—and here he squeezed my hand quite like a brother,—'go to New Zealand: there's no place like it—four harvests a-year and no taxes—good-bye! but *do go* to New Zealand.'"

Cousin Tom, in his benevolent condescension, had frequently promised to dine with cousin Jack, and, as Jack himself would insist upon calling her, cousin Sally. Twice had Tom named the day—twice had Jack mortgaged something of the comforts of the ensuing six days, that he might make the Sunday banquet more worthy of the patronage of Tom. Twice had cousin Sally—a plain, homely little woman—been thrown into a fluster by the promised advent of the important cousin Tom. More: Tom had been promised by Jack to the children as a most especial treat, and the little ones counted the days and then the hours for the arrival of the mysterious, the wonderful cousin Tom.

"Bless, my heart, Sally!" cried cousin Jack, as the church clock struck two, "I hope nothing has happened to dear cousin Tom."

"Happened to him," cried cousin Sally, with lowering discontent, and an expressive look at a shoulder of mutton dished and soddening before the fire; whilst covered plates upon the hobs gave token of turnip-tops and dumplings—"what should happen to him?"

"He couldn't have mistaken me—I'm sure I said one o'clock," observed Jack, looking anxiously towards the window, where his

two children, with noses flattened against the panes, were watching for cousin Tom.

"This is the third time he has made a fool of us," exclaimed cousin Sally.

"Don't talk in that way, Sally; if he don't come now, something must have happened to him. He promised to come, and he's so fond of me! An excellent creature, cousin Tom."

"The mutton's rags," said cousin Sally, frowning on the seething joint.

"Always a man of his word," said the husband.

"Turnip-tops not worth a farthing," continued cousin Sally.

"Little forgetful, but has a heart of gold."

"Dumplings like lead."

"Here's cousin!" lisped one of the children, "cousin Tom!"

"No, it isn't," said the elder, "'tis only a funeral."

For the third time, cousin Tom disappointed the hopes of the too sanguine Jack. In justice, however, to Tom, we must state that his promises to dine were rather inferred by Jack, than seriously made by the prosperous cousin.

"To-morrow's Sunday," Jack has cried, suddenly coming upon the unguarded Tom, at the time in high conversation with very genteel acquaintance; "you must come—one o'clock—plain living you know—mutton and dumplings—you always liked dumplings —say you *will* come."

On this, Tom, like Hotspur, "all smarting" would make answer, he "would," or "would not," which answer Jack, in his gladness, immediately received as a serious pledge; and for this reason—a reason only discoverable by himself—"Cousin Tom was so fond of him."

Cousin Tom yearned for high connexions. Having fairly sweated to achieve the honour, cousin Tom was become a member of a small club. For many days he had hung upon the looks of the Honourable Alexander Mulington, a gentleman of somewhat confined means, and limited understanding. Happy moment! At precisely five minutes past one o'clock, on the first of April, 18—, the hand of cousin Tom was for the first time suffered to grasp the two outstretched fingers of the Honourable Alexander Mulington. We are thus scrupulous as to the time, as it was the most important in Tom's existence. As the great Danish sculptor once called his birth-day, that day on which he first entered Rome, so did Tom only begin to live from the squeeze permitted to him by the benignant Mulington!

The day was Sunday—a May Sunday; and the friendship of Tom and his Honourable friend had become more glowing with

the season. What could have brought the Honourable Alexander Mulington into the northern suburbs, we cannot guess; let it suffice, he was somewhere in Camden-town; and wandering in that unknown region was suddenly encountered by cousin Tom. We shall not chronicle all the discourse that ensued upon the meeting; however, we may state that Tom ventured to call his Honourable friend "a devil of a fellow," Mulington smiling a mute confession to the charge. Moreover, an elderly spinster, passing, with a large Prayer-book, cast a withering look at the two friends, one of whom was at the time laughing very irreverently, whilst the other, as it seemed to the lady, incoherently exclaimed, "D—d fine,—d—d fine,—quite an angel."

Thus stood the friends, and thus, soul communing with soul, they laughed away the moments, when suddenly cousin Tom was roused to the gross events of wayfaring life by a most vehement slap on the shoulder. Quick as thought he turned, and—oh, shame!—oh, horror!—oh, death to his new-born friendship with the Honourable Alexander Mulington! — there stood cousin Jack, all his good-natured face melting with a smile, his right hand outstretched, while his left fore-finger pointed gracefully and significantly down to his feet, where in a red dish smoked a breast of veal, that moment from the baker's—a breast of veal hissing and bubbling on a bed of brown potatoes!

"I knew you'd come—I told Sally there must have been a mistake. She said it was pride—but la! I knew you'd drop in upon us and take pot-luck—come along—bring your friend with you—there'll be quite enough—and you'll be welcome, sir, as the flowers in May. Here, Tommy," and cousin Jack turned to his eldest son, a plump urchin of seven years old, glistening in a white pinafore, and carrying in his two hands a mug of porter—"Cousin Tom," and Jacked smiled again as he displayed the boy, "you know he's your namesake; I christened him after you, because I knew you were always so very fond of me. Here, Tommy, run to the Coach-and-Horses, and tell 'em to send home another pot of beer—in their own pot—mother won't mind the halfpenny—and, now, cousin Tom, if you and your friend will just follow me down that court"——

The despairing artist feeling that the passion of his heroine defied his skill, modestly yet cunningly hung a veil before her. A like difficulty suggests to us a like escape. We shall not attempt to describe the agony of cousin Tom—the tortures of the moment. Talk of the punishment of the brazen bull; what was it to the horrors of that breast of veal? We will not linger on the theme; but simply assure the reader that neither Tom, nor his friend, the Honourable Alexander Mulington, dined with

cousin Jack. We have, however, to record another painful incident arising from this ill-timed hospitality. After many struggles, cousin Tom was compelled to quit the club; for a month he wrestled with his destiny; but it was too much for the nerves of a stoic that his appearance should be the inevitable signal to divers members to commence an earnest inquiry of the waiters if there was in the house a breast of veal, with particular and most significant queries, touching—baked potatoes.

How cousin Jack was anathematised by cousin Tom!

A year or two passed away, and cousin Tom fell in love; it was prudent in him to have an intense affection for Dorothea Sybilwitz, the only child of a German baron, who, philosophically regardless of the evanescent advantages of nobility, devoted his many days to the vending of a certain precious ointment made patent by the state. The daughter of the medicinal philosopher had a dowry of twenty thousand pounds; she had, moreover, a very proper notion of the delightful privileges of worldly station. She was a mere woman, and was not content to sink the nobility inherited from her father in her father's gallipots. Hence, Dorothea Sybilwitz, as the phrase runs, looked high. How it happened, let Cupid answer; but certain it is, that with all these aspirations, Dorothea fell in love with cousin Tom. It was true—she reasoned with herself—he had no high relations to recommend him; but then, upon his own showing, he had no poor, beggarly connexions to cast a shadow on her golden fortunes. It was thus Dorothea compromised between her love of nobility and her love of cousin Tom. Rank was, after all, an abstract idea; whereas cousin Tom was really a tall, well-made young fellow, with very tantalising whiskers. The match was settled—Dorothea Sybilwitz was the affianced bride of cousin Tom.

What a lovely day was the Derby day of ——! Cousin Tom, within one month of his coming marriage with Dorothea Sybilwitz, with his bride and two female friends, took the road to Epsom. There never was such a delightful day: even the confusion that now and then occurred upon the way served to give a whet, a zest, to the pleasure of the scene. A thousand and a thousand vehicles lined the road. Cousin Tom was all attention, and Dorothea Sybilwitz was all bliss, when suddenly a voice roared above the hubbub,—"Tom, Tom,—cousin Tom, I say," and Tom casting his eyes down, beheld in a low spring-cart, drawn by a pony, something less than a Newfoundland dog, the smiling, happy cousin Jack! "How are you, cousin Tom?—here we are, you see—here's Sally—and here's the two boys—

"An emerald, nothing less. It is the drinker's stone. In a week, Master Curlew?"

"This day week, sir, if I live in health."

The day came, Stephen was a tradesman of his word, and the stranger sat in the back parlour, looking curiously into the ring.

"*Per Bacco!* Rarely done. Why, Master Curlew, thou hast caught the very chops of glorious Liber; his swimming eyes, and blessed mouth. Ha! ha! thou hast put thy heart into the work, Master Curlew; and how cunningly hast thou all but hid the dart of Death behind the thyrsus of the god. How his life-giving hand clutches the pulpy cluster, and with what a gush comes down the purple rain, plashing into rubies in the cup of Mors!"

"It was my wish to satisfy, most noble sir," said Stephen, meekly; somewhat confounded by the loud praises of the speaker.

"May you never be choked with a grape-stone, Master Curlew, for this goodly work. Ha!" and the speaker looked archly at the withered goldsmith; "it hath cost thee many a headache ere thou couldst do this."

"If I may say it, I have laboured hard at the craft—have been a thrifty, sober man," said Stephen.

"Sober! Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the speaker, and his face glowed redder, and his eyes melted; "sober! why, thou wast begot in a wine cask, and suckled by a bottle, or thou hadst never done this. By the thigh of Jupiter! he who touched this," and the stranger held up the ring to his eye, and laughed again, "he who touched this, hath never known water. Tut! man, were I to pink thee with a sword, thou'dst bleed wine!"

"I," cried Stephen, "I bleed;" and he glanced fearfully towards the door, and then at the stranger, who continued to look at the ring.

"The skin of the sorriest goat shall sometimes hold the choicest liquor," said the stranger, looking into the dry face of the goldsmith. "Come, confess, art thou not a sly roisterer? Or art thou a hermit over thy drops, and dost count flasks alone? Ay! ay! well, to thy cellar, man; and,—yes,—thine arms are long enough,—bring up ten bottles of thy choicest Malaga."

"I!—my cellar!—Malaga!" stammered Stephen.

"Surely thou hast a cellar?" and the stranger put his hat upon the table with the air of a man set in for a carouse.

"For forty years, but it hath never known wine," cried the goldsmith. "I—I have never known wine." The stranger said nothing; but turning full upon Stephen, and placing his hands upon his knees, he blew out his flushing cheeks like a bagpipe, and sat with his eyes blazing upon the heretic. "No, never!"

gasped Stephen, terrified, for a sense of his wickedness began to possess him.

"And dost thou repent?" asked the stranger, with a touch of mercy towards the sinner.

"I—humph! I'm a poor man," cried Curlew; "yes, though I'm a goldsmith, and seem rich, I—I'm poor! poor!"

"Well 'tis lucky I come provided;" and the stranger placed upon the table a couple of flasks. Whether he took them from under his cloak, or drew them through the floor, Stephen knew not; but he started at them as they stood rebukingly upon his table, as if they had been two sheeted ghosts. "Come, glasses," cried the giver of the wine.

"Glasses!" echoed Stephen, "in my house!"

"Right, glasses! No—cups, and let them be gold ones,"—and the bacchanal, for it was plain he was such, waved his arm with an authority which Stephen attempted not to dispute, but rose, and hobbled into the shop, and returned with two cups, just as the first cork was drawn. "Come there's sunlight in that, eh?" cried the stranger, as he poured the wine into the vessels. "So, thou hast never drunk wine? Well, here's to the baptism of thy heart." And the stranger emptied the cup, and his lips smacked like a whip.

And Stephen Curlew tasted the wine, and looked around, below, above; and the oaken wainscot did not split in twain, nor did the floor yawn, nor the ceiling gape. Stephen tasted a second time; thrice did he drink, and he licked his mouth as a cat licks the cream from her whiskers, and putting his left hand upon his belly, softly sighed.

"Ha! ha! another cup? I know thou wilt," and Stephen took another, and another; and the two flasks were in brief time emptied. They were, however, speedily followed by two more, placed by the stranger on the table, Stephen opening his eyes and mouth at their mysterious appearance. The contents of these were duly swallowed, and lo! another two stood before the goldsmith, or, as he then thought, four.

"There never was such a Bacchus!" cried Stephen's customer, eyeing the ring. "Why, a man may see his stomach fairly heave, and his cheek ripen with wine; yet, till this night, thou hadst never tasted the juice? What—what could have taught thee to carve the god so capitally?"

"Instinct—instinct," called out the goldsmith, his lips turned to clay by too much wine.

"And yet," said the stranger, "I care not so much for—How old art thou, Stephen?"

"Sixty-five," and Stephen hiccuped.

THE MANAGER'S PIG.

Some people are not to be persuaded to taste of any creatures they have daily seen and been acquainted with whilst they were alive. * * * * In this behaviour, methinks there appears something like a consciousness of guilt; it looks as if they endeavoured to save themselves from the imputation of a crime (which they know sticks somewhere) by removing the cause of it as far as they can from themselves.—MANDEVILLE.

ARISTIDES TINFOIL, it is our fixed belief, was intended by nature either for lawn sleeves or ermined robes: he was, we doubt it not, sent into this world an embryo bishop, or a lord-chief-justice *in posse.* Such, we are convinced, was the benignant purpose of nature: but the cruel despotism of worldly circumstance relentlessly crossed the fair design; and Tinfoil, with a heart of honey and a head of iron, was only a player—or, we should rather say, a master among players. Tinfoil might have preached charity-sermons till tears should have flowed and flowed again: no matter; he acted the benevolent old men to the sobs and spasms of a crowded audience. He might, with singular efficacy, have passed sentence of death on coiners and sheep-stealers; circumstances, however, confined his mild reproofs to scene-shifters, bill-stickers, Cupids at one shilling per night, and white muslin Graces.

"Where is Mr. Moriturus?" asked Tinfoil, chagrined at the untoward absence of his retainer. "Where is he?"

"Ill, sir," was the melancholy answer; "very ill."

"Ill!" exclaimed Tinfoil, in a tone of anger, quickly subsiding into mild remonstrance; "Ill!—why—why doesn't the good man *die at once?*"

A pretty budding girl had, unhappily, listened to the silvery tongue of a rival manager. "Take her from the villain!" exclaimed Tinfoil, to the sorrowing parent; "bring her here, and then—then I'll tell you what I'll do."

"Dear, kind Mr. Tinfoil, what will you do?"

"I'll bring her out, sir—bring her out in—" and here the manager named a play in which the horrors of seduction are painted in bold colours for the indignant virtuous: "I'll bring her out in that, sir, as a particular favour to you, and sympathising as I must with the affliction you suffer, I—I myself will play the injured father, sir."

These, however, are but faint lines in the strongly-marked character of Tinfoil, and merely displaying them to awaken the attention of the reader to what we consider a most triumphant piece of casuistry on the part of our hero—to an incident which admits of so many hundred worldly illustrations—we shall proceed to the pig. The subject, we own, may appear unpromising from its extreme homeliness; yet, as the precious bezoar is sought for in deer and goats, so may a pearl of price be found even in a pig.

It is our fervent wish to be most exact in every point of this little history; yet cannot we remember the exact year in which Tinfoil, revolving in his managerial mind the very many experiments made under his government on the curiosity and sensibilities of the public, determined, in a golden moment, upon the introduction of a pig, in a drama to be expressly written for the animal's capacities. In the slang of the craft, the pig was to be measured for his part.

We cannot take it upon ourselves to avow, that an accident of late occurrence to a brother actor did not, at least remotely, influence the choice of Tinfoil. The mishap was this. A few miles from London—for the sake of unborn generations we conceal the name of the town—the dullard denizens had manifested an extraordinary apathy to the delights of the drama. In the despairing words of one of the sufferers, "nothing could move 'em." However, another of more sanguine temperament, resolved to make a last bold effort on their stubborn souls; and to such high end, set a pig at them. Mingling the blandishments of the lottery with the witcheries of the drama, he caused it to be printed in boldest type to the townspeople of ——, that a shower of little bits of paper would take place between the play and farce, and amidst this shower, a prize would descend, conveying to the lucky possessor the entire property of a real China-bred porker! Inconceivable as to us it is, the scheme failed—the pig remained live stock upon the hands of the projector, who, the next morning, walked to town; and recounting his adverse fortune to the calculating Tinfoil, supplicated any employment.

"And you still possess the pig? Humph!" mused Tinfoil: "perhaps, we may come to some arrangement."

In few words, the applicant was admitted among Tinfoil's

troop; the pig, at a nominal price, passing into the hands of the manager.

The pig was no sooner a member of the company, than the household author was summoned by Tinfoil, who, introducing the man of letters to the porker, shortly intimated that "he must write a part for him."

"For a pig, sir?" exclaimed the author.

"Measure him," said Tinfoil, not condescending to notice the astonishment of the dramatist.

"But, my dear sir, it is impossible that ——"

"Sir! impossible is a word which I cannot allow in my establishment. By this time, sir, you ought to know that my will, sir, is sufficient for all things, sir,—that, in a word, sir, there is a great deal of Napoleon about me, sir."

We must admit that the dramatist ought not to have forgotten this last interesting circumstance, Mr. Tinfoil himself very frequently recurring to it. Indeed, it was only an hour before, that he had censured the charwoman for having squandered a whole sack of saw-dust on the hall floor, when half a sack was the allotted quantity. "He, Mr. Tinfoil, had said half a sack; and the woman knew, or ought to know, there was a good deal of Napoleon about him!" To return to the pig.

"Measure him, sir," cried Mr. Tinfoil, the deepening tones growling through his teeth, and his finger pointing still more emphatically downwards to the pig.

"Why," observed the author, "if it could be measured, perhaps——"

"*If* it could! Sir," and Mr. Tinfoil, when at all excited, trolled the monosyllable with peculiar energy—"Sir, I wouldn't give a straw for a dramatist who couldn't measure the cholera-morbus."

"Much may be done for an actor by measuring," remarked the dramatist, gradually falling into the opinion of his employer.

"Everything, sir! Good heavens! what might I not have been, had I condescended to be measured? Human nature, sir,—the divine and glorious characteristic of our common being, sir,—that is the thing, sir, by heavens! sir, when I think of that great creature, Shakespeare, sir, and think that he never measured actors—no, sir——"

"No, sir," acquiesced the dramatist.

"Notwithstanding, sir, we live in other times, sir; and you must write a part for the pig, sir."

"Very well, sir; if he must be measured, sir, he must," said the author.

"It's a melancholy thing to be obliged to succumb to the folly

of the day," remarked Mr. Tinfoil; "and yet, sir, I could name certain people, sir, who, by heavens! sir, would not have a part to their backs, sir, if they had not been measured for it, sir. Let me see: it is now three o'clock—well, some time to-night, you'll let me have the piece for the pig, sir."

Now, whether the writer addressed was by his "so potent art" enabled to measure a pig—to write a perfect swinish drama in a few hours—or whether, knowing the Buonapartean self-will of the manager, the dramatist thought it wise to make no remonstrance, we cannot truly discover: certain it is, with no objection made, he took his leave.

"An extraordinary young man, sir!—I have brought him out, sir—a wonderful young man, sir," observed Mr. Tinfoil to a friend and neighbour, a dealer in marine-stores. "Only wants working, sir—requires nothing but being kept at it, sir."

"Well, it must be a puzzling trade," remarked the dealer.

"Puzzling, sir! By heavens! sir, my heart bleeds for men of letters, sir—they are great creatures, sir—wonderful natures, sir—we cannot think too highly of them, sir—cannot sufficiently reward them, sir! Now, sir, it is perfectly unknown my liberality towards that young man! But then, sir—it is my delight, sir, when I find real genius, sir—when I meet with a man of original mind, sir—by heavens! sir," again cried Mr. Tinfoil, resorting to the exclamation as an outlet for his overcharged feelings.

The pig was duly measured—the piece prepared—and, having been produced at an enormous expense, was sealed with the unqualified approbation of a discerning public.

The pig-drama had been represented about twenty nights, when the author of the piece, in friendly converse with his patron manager, remarked "that the porker had been a most profitable venture."

"Why, sir," replied Mr. Tinfoil, "tolerably well; but the fact is, I am obliged to bolster him. He has had the advantage of three new afterpieces, and therefore can't complain that he has been let down. Still, the pig has done very well, and perhaps may run a fortnight more." Saying this, Tinfoil quaffed from a brimming glass of his chosen fluid.

"At all events," remarked the author, "the pig possesses one advantage, not to be found in any other of your actors."

"And what, sir," asked Mr. Tinfoil, "what may that be?"

"Why, after the pig has done his work, and the piece is put by, you may eat the pig."

The manager started from the inhuman man of letters with a look of mingled horror, disgust, and pity. When he had some-

what recovered from his amazement, he asked with evident loathing, "What did you say, sir?"

"I said," replied the insensible author, "that when the pig had played out his part, you might eat him."

Mr. Tinfoil, gently stirring his brandy-and-water, fixed an eye, like that of death-darting cockatrice, upon the author, and after swallowing the liquor, and thereby somewhat regaining his self-possession, he addressed the thoughtless dramatist in words and tones that, as he has since declared, can never cease to vibrate in his memory.

"Sir!" thus spoke Mr. Tinfoil. "I regret—much regret, sir, that any thing in my conduct could have induced you, sir, to think so uncharitably of my disposition, sir."

"I assure you, sir"——

"Hear me out, sir. What, sir! think me capable of feeding upon an animal that I have played with—a creature, whose sagacity has almost made it my humble friend—a pig that has eaten from my hand—that knows my voice—that I—I eat that pig—good heavens, sir!"

"I'm sure I didn't mean"——

"No, sir," cried Tinfoil, "not were I starving, sir—not were I famishing, sir, could I be brought to taste that pig."

Much more did Mr. Tinfoil deliver declaratory of his horror at the bare idea of setting his teeth in the flesh of his quadruped actor; and the rebuked man of letters quitted the manager with an exalted notion of his sensibility.

The pig-drama continued to be played to the increasing satisfaction of the public; the audience, however, only being admitted to view the professional abilities of the animal, his suppers—from some extraordinary omission of Tinfoil—not being eaten before the curtain. Great, however, as was the success of the pig, at about the fortieth night his prosperity began to wane—he was withdrawn, and passed into oblivion.

A few weeks had elapsed, and the author was summoned to the dwelling of his manager, to write a play for a stud of horses. Tinfoil was at dinner; whereto he courteously invited his household scribe.

"You oughtn't to refuse," said one of the diners; "for this," and the speaker pointed to some pickled pork in the dish—"this is an old friend of yours."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the dramatist, looking reproachfully at Tinfoil. "Why, not the pig?"

Tinfoil, somewhat abashed, coughed and nodded.

"Why, you said that nothing on earth would tempt you to eat that pig?"

"No more it could, sir," cried the assured manager, "No, sir, —no more it could,—*unless salted!*"

Of how many applications is this casuistry of the manager susceptible!

"When, sir," cried the pensioned patriot, "I swore that no power in the universal world could make me accept a favour at the hands of such men,—I meant"——

"*Unless salted!*"

How often is it with men's principles, as with the manager's pig; things inviolable, immutable—*unless salted?*

THE
TAPESTRY WEAVER OF BEAUVAIS.

THE oldest people of Beauvais remembered Schatten the tapestry-weaver. Some vowed he was threescore, some a hundred years old; and ever as the subject was touched upon, Schatten would widen his huge mouth, and cry with a low chuckle, "Ay, ay, a thousand—more or less. I shall live to see wrinkles in the sun." None knew from what stock he sprang—from what land he came. Such questions he would ever parry with some extravagance. "I was born of felspar and quartz, and my home was the Hartz Mountains when they were no bigger than mole-hills." And thus Schatten lived on. He saw the child rise into manhood—wed—become a parent—a grey-headed man—a corpse; and so with the child's child, and yet no change came upon Schatten. He stood, a flinty image gazing on dying generations.

A hovel in an obscure part of Beauvais was the dwelling of the weaver. There was his tapestry-loom; and there, day after day, and night after night, would he work, at times droning a song to cheer what seemed the monotony of an eternal employment. Notwithstanding the inexplicable mystery about the man, he was, on the whole, a favourite with his fellow-townsmen. There was something so meek in his demeanour, so placid, so unassuming, and his speech was so soft and gentle, that although his name had been mingled in strange recitals, he had never been molested, but, on the contrary, was generally considered a harmless, well-meaning creature; one who, far from sneering at the pleasures of youth, looked upon them with seeming satisfaction. No one more frequently witnessed the bacchanal revelries of the topers of Beauvais; for, though Schatten was no drinker himself, he beheld with unaffected pleasure the loose jollity of others. The like at feasts: although he was temperate as a

cameleon, he would most readily carve huge collops for others. He seemed to hold in peculiar admiration a purple bloated face and swagging paunch, though his own sharp visage was as yellow as saffron, and his figure lank as a thread-paper. This urbanity towards the failings of others was, it will be conceded, the secret of his popularity. Though he himself abstained from all animal indulgence, he not only did not gloomily lecture on the lawlessness of appetite, but, on the contrary, smiled on its achievements. This charity hath served many besides old Schatten.

But there was another circumstance that greatly assisted the goodly reputation of the weaver: it was the character of his many visitors and pupils. His hovel was the resort of the loveliest girls—the most beautiful youths, not only of the town of Beauvais, but from the great city itself—from elegant, voluptuous Paris; for even at the period of which we write, it was distinguished for the refinement and luxuries of life.

Schatten, in his capacity of tapestry-weaver, had pictures of every variety of subject; and it was his good fortune, that those professors who excelled in the beautiful art, seemed by common consent to seek old Schatten, that he might immortalise their radiant sketches in his still more exquisite tapestry. There was no subject which painting could pourtray—no imagination which it could robe in life and colour, that was not ready for the loom of Schatten. If a battle were the theme, there might be seen contending heroes, with stern rapture in their faces, glory about their heads—their every limb glowing as with Mars' own fire—their swords like sunbeams, and the smoking blood more like libations to purple Liber, than torrents in which the human life gushed forth. Thus, a battle woven by old Schatten was a grand and glorious thing—each combatant was an excited god; whilst the drained and pallid carcass—the dreadful wounds, with jagged and gaping mouths—the rigid muscle straining against death—the fixed and stone-like eye, and clotted hair—all the gross, substantial horrors of systematic slaughter, were thrown into the shade: they were not to expose that common liar—Glory. If the subject were beauty, there might be seen—as erst was chosen by the antique master—one charm from twenty different faces, making a miracle of perfection. All that was voluptuous and entrancing shone in the dewy light of woman's eye; there was an eternal youth in her red lip, a tenderness in her warm cheek: too pure for the earth, too exquisitely fragile, she seemed of a sisterhood 'twixt humanity and angels. The same masterly hand was displayed though the subject was the banquet of the glutton—the supper was still spread "in the Apollo." The same power shown in the golden heaps of the miser: the food, the

wine, seemed ambrosia and nectar, bestowing immortality on the lip that tasted: the gold glittered like something dropped from the skies, to be worn as amulets against calamity.

A man so potent in his handicraft as Schatten might have surrounded himself with all the symbols of wealth; and, had he been ambitious, have successfully contended for the highest honours of citizenship. But, it was plain, he valued gold as ashes: and for the trappings of state and place, the most regal shows, the pomp and blazonry of kings, were with him matter for a jest.

"Alack!" cried Michel Sous, a withered money-scrivener of Beauvais—"I hear 'twas a brave sight; and plague on my shanks! I have missed it. Which way went the procession?" The man of bonds and pieces remained gaping for the answer of the tapestry-weaver, who stood, cross-legged, leaning on his staff, with a face immoveable as granite. It was a day of triumph, a time of holiday, and Michel had for once quitted his bags and desk to sun himself in the glory of his fellow-townsmen. "Weaver, I say, which way went the procession, and where shall I find it?"

"It went, after some turnings, into the churchyard: take up a handful of mould, and, in truth, you clutch a part of what you seek."

"Why, thou art drunk, merry, or mad!—The churchyard and mould! I ask you where went, where *is*, the procession?"

"Where I tell you. I saw it pass by me, and after some windings and shiftings, I saw each brave puppet—that strutted as though the angels were looking at it—I saw it shrink, and bend, and totter, and the yellowness of age crept over it, and its eye faded, and its hair whitened, and it crawled into the earth as the fox slinks beneath his cover. The trumpets lay dumb and cankering in the soil—the rustling flags dropt tinder at the breeze—the rust-eaten sword crumbled beneath the mattock of the digger, and rank grass grows above the pomp of the last hour."

"Why, Schatten, thou art dreaming. Blessed St. Mary! thou surely didst not see the sight, else thou hadst told me a truer story of its progress."

"Not so: trust me, I saw the revel—but I beheld it from the pinnacle of time; and I tell you again, all the men who passed me I watched into the churchyard. Their haughty eyes—their trophies, flags, and clamorous pipes—I say to you, they are dust! The shout of triumph hath died in the distance, and *hic jacet* is now the only tongue."

"So, so—a riddle," crowed the scrivener; and he hobbled on to seek a less perplexing respondent.

Such were, at times, the answers of old Schatten, who, when he pleased, could be as grave and oracular as a father confessor. Such were his reflections on pageants, which, to many thoughtless and happy minds, were the symbols of all earthly greatness. It was his pastime to analyse appearance—to unravel the glossy web of policy—to unfold the swathings of vain pomp and ceremony, and point to the foul mummy they encased. Yet would he vary this custom with smiles, and laughter, and witty sayings, which gave a savour to the wine they honoured. He would, with his thin voice, troll a song in praise of beauty, and, with quick conceits, prick on lusty youth to deeds of jollity and wild adventure; nay, he would often mingle in the revelry. Many a time have the townsfolk of Beauvais laughed at the gambols of old Schatten, who, pranked in his best, would trip it with some blue-eyed fair one, who, seemingly unconscious of the deformity of her partner, would glide through the dance all smiles and sweetness, as though mortal youth were wedded to immortality, and wrinkles and gray hairs were not the inheritance of the children of earth. Alas! but a few months, or weeks, and the poor maiden—she who seemed the embodied principle of beauty and motion—was as the "clods of the valley," a mass of blank insensibility.

Various were the ways by which old Schatten had insinuated himself into the good graces of the people of Beauvais. To please them, he would, when in the humour, act twenty different parts—now he would be a learned doctor, and now a mountebank; at times he would utter the wisdom of sages—at times play a hundred antic tricks, making his audience shout with merriment. For one long winter did Schatten profoundly lecture upon laurels, crowns, swords, and money-bags; and, like a skilful chemist, would he analyse their component parts.

"This," cried Schatten, producing a semblance of the wreath, "this is the laurel crown of one of the Cæsars:—how fresh and green the leaves remain!——Ha! there is no such preservative as innocent blood—it embalms the names of mighty potentates, who else had never been heard of: steeped in it, deformity becomes loveliness—fame colours her most lasting pictures with its paint! The fields that grew this branch were richly manured: tens of thousands of hearts lay rotting there—the light of thousands of eyes was quenched—palaces and hovels, in undistinguished heaps, were strewn about the soil—there lay the hoary and the unborn—the murdered wife and the outraged virgin—and showers of tears falling on this garden of agony and horror, it was miraculously fertile—for lo! it gave forth this one branch, to deck the forehead of one man! In the veins that

seam its leaves are the heart-strings of murdered nations; it is the plant of fire and blood, reaped by the sword!——Such is the conqueror's laurel.

"And here is the despot's diadem!——Many a time, like glowing iron, hath it seared the brows it circled. Of what is it composed? What wonderful ingredients meet in this quintessence of worldly wealth? See, the passions and the feelings that helped to make it, still haunt their handiwork: their shadows live in its glittering metal and its flashing gems. Full-blooded power, with a demon's eye, glares from this ruby—leprous fear trembles in these pearls—in every diamond, care or compunction weeps a tear! Throughout the gold I see a thousand forms, dawning and fading like hues in heated steel: —there, fancy detects the assassin with his knife—there, the bondsman snaps his chain—there, is the headsman—there, the civil war! These are the shades that haunt the despot's crown; that wear him waking, and screech to him in his sleep. A nation's groan is pent up in its round. It is a living thing that eats into the brain of the possessor, making him mad and drunk for blood and power!

"The miser's money-bag!——Another monster—all throat. Could its owner have put the sun itself within this bag, the world for him had been in darkness—perpetual night had cast a pall upon creation—the fruits of earth had withered in the bud, and want and misery been universal; whilst he, the thrifty villain! smugly lived in bloom, and in his very baseness found felicity!——And yet, what was the worth of all this bag contained? Though it was stuffed with wealth, it was hung about with fears. As its owner slid his palm into the heap, he would start as though he felt the hand of death were hidden there to grasp him. He was almost blind within a world of beauty:—his eye saw no images save those painted by gold; his ears heard not, save when the metal tinkled; his tongue was dumb, if it spoke not of wealth; the glittering pieces were to him the children of his heart and soul—dull offspring of the foulest appetites; yet he hugged them to his bosom—he hugged them, and in his dying hour they turned to snakes, and stung him in the embrace!——This is the miser's money-bag—the abode of reptiles, the sepulchre of the soul!

"The sword!—Ceremony sanctifies it. Some kingly words are spoken—a trumpet is blown; straightway the sword is ennobled!

"The lawyer's gown!—the masquerading dress of common sense. There is a living instinct in its web: let golden villany come under it, and with a thought it flows and spreads, and gives

an ample shelter to the thing it covers; let poor knavery seek it, and it shrinks and curtains up, and leaves the trembling victim naked to the court."

Thus, in his graver moments, would old Schatten preach to his hearers; then, with a thought, he would break from the solemn discourse, and make merriment with the self-same objects. Thus, like a skilful juggler, he would hold the conqueror's laurel, that hardy plant, to his lips, and with a puff blow it into dust; he would change the tiara into a huge snake, monstrous and ugly, and make the beholders start at its contortions. The long purse he would ravel into a shroud: he would melt the sword into drops of blood, and turn the lawyer's gown into a net of steel. Whilst these tricks made him a favourite with the young and gay, his learning, and the thousand stories he had of men of all ages and of all ranks, rendered him an oracle of wisdom to the studious. It was observed that Schatten, whilst narrating any history, always spoke as though he had been an eye-witness of the circumstance he detailed; nay, as though he had known their most secret thoughts.

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And who is Schatten, whose history is yet unfinished? Who is this mysterious Weaver, whose deeds, if chronicled, would fill thousands of folios? He is everywhere about us: in the solitude of our chamber, in the press and throng of the street, in the wilderness, and in the city.

—"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."

THE GENTEEL PIGEONS.

"NOT at home!" exclaimed Captain Albatross.

"Not in town!" cried the Captain's lady.

"No, ma'am," replied the maid, as with some trepidation she followed the visitors, who with no ceremony forced themselves into the parlour.

Captain Albatross, looking very sagaciously at the maid, observed, "I see you don't know us; say Albatross—Captain Albatross."

"As friends—early friends,—the Captain was your master's godfather"——

"The only son I ever had," remarked Captain Albatross, with a sigh.

"They'll be glad to see us," was the assurance of the Captain's lady to the hesitating maid.

"I dare say, ma'am; delighted, no doubt," said the girl; "very much pleased, I'm sure; that is, when they come home, ma'am; but, you know, ma'am, the very day they married they left home for a month, ma'am; and as that's only a fortnight ago, ma'am, why, it is plain, ma'am, that their time isn't up, ma'am."

Captain Albatross, though only an officer of disbanded militia, had the sternness of a Frederick; hence, lowering his bushy black eyebrows, and advancing one step towards the maid, who received the fiery looks of the inquisitor with admirable coolness, he cried in sounds of thunder, "Young woman, can you look in my face?"

"I'll try, sir," said the girl, with a simplicity lost upon the guest, who only roared the louder.

"I mean, wench, can you look in my face, and, without blushing, tell me that Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon are not in town?" asked the Captain.

The maid, twitted by the dictatorial tones of the Captain, and

resolved at any cost to maintain the ground she had taken, replied with praiseworthy firmness, looking boldly at Albatross, " Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon are not at home."

" Young woman," remarked Captain Albatross, raising his forefinger, and shaking his head in the serene countenance of the domestic, " Young woman, I don't know what wages they give you, but to some families you'd be worth any money."

" My dearest Albatross," said his charitable lady, " may you not have been mistaken ? "

" Mistaken, Leonora ! " cried the Captain ; " I — Captain Albatross, mistaken ! Did I not see him—see him last night with a lady in the opposite box ? How can any man in such a case mistake or be mistaken ? "

" Exactly what I said," replied Mrs. Albatross, with a significant glance at the Captain, " when I heard that you and a certain lady were at the Surrey Gardens, feeding the monkeys with macaroons."

" And I, ha ! ha ! "—here the Captain made a very painstaking attempt to laugh—" I—ha ! ha ! as I proved it by my dear friend Lieutenant Nibble, was at Hampton, fishing. You know, Leonora, that was the very day I caught that extraordinary gudgeon. You remember its picture was taken, and now hangs in the hall at the Bell ? " and again Captain Albatross essayed a laugh.

" I only know, Edward," replied the Captain's lady, and her voice trembled, and she took her handkerchief from her reticule, " I only know that there are times when those macaroons lie very heavy at my heart."

" Now, Leonora," exclaimed Captain Albatross, evidently hurt by the unjust suspicions of his too fond wife, " I did think this subject buried for ever between us. Many men might be mistaken for me ; for I trust there's nothing odd, nothing peculiar about me. I have, I hope, merely the easy demeanour, the sustained repose of a gentleman ; there's no character, as it's called, about me : but for Pigeon—is it possible to mistake him ? "

" Oh, yes, sir," cried the anxious maid, " very possible."

" How do you know ? " asked the stern Albatross.

" I'm sure of it," answered the self-satisfied girl.

" Sure ! " echoed the Captain's lady, with a look of contempt at the domestic, " sure ! "

" Sure, ma'am," replied the servant ; " for I've lived in many families, and I never yet knew the master of a house that there wasn't somebody about the town the very image of him."

" There is something in that, Leonora," remarked the Captain ; " still it *was* Pigeon."

"Never mind; perhaps they don't wish to be at home to us," said the Captain's lady, who with a sudden dignity prepared to depart.

"They're not at home," was the unnecessary avowal of the maid, as she readily followed the visitors to the door.

"Not the slightest consequence," remarked the Captain, as he stepped into the street.

"None whatever," said the Captain's lady.

"Not at home, I assure you," again asserted the maid, as she closed the door.

"Susan! Susan!" exclaimed a voice, and presently a pretty female head peeped over the staircase; "Who was that, Susan?"

"Captain Albatross and his wife," said Susan.

"Dear me!" cried the lady.

"They wanted to stand me out that you were at home, ma'am; but I was too much for them. The Captain would have it that he saw my master last night with a lady at"——

"What! Samuel!" and the owner of the pretty face almost screamed.

"Charlotte!" cried a masculine voice, and the lady was led back to her apartment by a gentleman. We know not whether to laud the firmness of Susan, or to blush for her depravity, when we assure the reader that that lady and gentleman were the newly-paired Pigeons. The Pigeons were in town! Yes, they had passed only half the honey-moon at the sea-side, and had returned to London a fortnight before their time.

Sam Pigeon and Charlotte Blue had been drawn to each other by a similarity of sentiment: their union was the happy result of sympathy—they both idolised the genteel; albeit, they were not too well skilled in the knowledge of its elements. Of this, however, they were well assured, that to be seen in London—to be confronted by any of their five hundred bosom friends within a month of their union—was to sink for ever in the judgment of the world—to go down a frightful descent in the estimation of all mankind. Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon belonged to that numerous and unhappy class of people who believe that "the world"—in reality represented by some fifteen acquaintances—has no other aim, no other thought, than that of watching the important movements of their important selves—of marking the cut of their coats and the colour of their gowns; nay, of duly registering their walks abroad and tarryings at home, the said world being all the time inhumanly indifferent to their very existence. "The world" is thought by these poor folks to be a very despotic, watchful, tyrannous, unforgiving creature; they may be assured that, as far as regards them and their works, the world is a very

easy, careless kind of person. "What will the world say?" asks Henpeck, when advised to separate from his wife. "I'd leave the wretch, take my little boy, and go into a lodging to-morrow, my dear," says Mrs. Sweetlips; "but then, my love, what will the world say?" "What! not go into mourning for your wife's uncle's cousin; why, my good Mr. Carib, what *do* you think the world will say?"—"Well, that *is* a good one!—a dustman with an umbrella! I should like to know what the world will say to that!" There never was such a goblin—such a mere bugbear, as that we make out of the unconscious, the indifferent world: it is the scooped turnip fixed on a sheeted mopstick, and lighted with a candle; a hideous apparition, scaring the stoutest traveller in his highways and byways of life. Happy the man who with a clear breast goes whistling on, easy that he knows the harmless things the spectre is made of! However, our immediate business is with the Pigeons.

The blissful couple—their loves consecrated by Hymen—found themselves, ere their wedding-day was over, on the sea-shore. They had quitted the busy, bustling scene of Kennington, with all its picturesque and grassy spots, for the sweet retirement of Brighton. It was there they proposed to perform matrimonial quarantine—it was there they intended to illustrate their devotion to the genteel: there they would wear away the rapturous month, returning in proper season to receive the condolence—we mean, congratulations—of their army of friends. Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon had already got through ten days, when it struck them that the sea—at least in summer—always appeared the same: there was no alteration whatever in the beach; even the chain-pier remained provokingly unchangeable.

"My love," said the bride, as, on the eleventh day, she arm-in-arm with her Pigeon, trod the shore, "my love," said she, with touching simplicity, "what do you think?"

Pigeon smiled, squeezed his wife's hand, and after a moment's intense thought, said, "I can't tell."

"Would you believe it?—I last night dreamt of Kennington Oval," said the bride.

"God bless me!" said the bridegroom, "how very odd! I too dreamt of it—I thought I was there."

"Ha!" and Mrs. Pigeon sighed.

"What's the matter, Charlotte?" inquired the fond Pigeon, with the fondest looks, and in the fondest voice.

"Our home will be a sweet place, Samuel," observed the wife.

"A bower of love, Charlotte," was the opinion of the husband. "How can it be otherwise?"

"I hope Susan will be kind to my canaries: poor things! they'll not sing a note while I'm away—they'll not, indeed, Samuel."

"Well, we shall be at home at the end of the month," said Samuel.

"And there's fifteen days gone already," said Charlotte.

"No, my dear, only eleven, love; to-day is the eleventh day—not fifteen yet," said Mr. Pigeon.

"To be sure: what a head I have! I hope Susan will be careful of the furniture—and then those poor dear birds! Bless me! and those sweet gold-fish—I forgot to give her particular directions. Pretty creatures! how they will miss me! Lovely things! how they will miss the flies I used to catch for them!"

"Nay, my dearest, Susan has a kind heart, and will let 'em want for nothing."

"It would be very wrong to return to London in the honey-moon," remarked Mrs. Pigeon.

"What would the world say?" exclaimed Mr. Pigeon.

"We should be lost for ever in genteel society," said the wife.

"We should, indeed," said the solemn husband.

"And yet, Samuel, those dear canaries!"

Enough: two more dreary, sultry days did the ecstatic couple endure "body's banishment" from Kennington; when, on the fourteenth morning of their wedded life, they took their seats in the coach for London.

"La! ma'am, is it you?" exclaimed Susan, as she opened the door to the rejoicing couple. "Come back so soon!"

"Hush! Susan, not a word," cried Mrs. Pigeon. "Thank heaven! we are at home," and she sank in a chair.

"Susan," said Mr. Pigeon, who called up a serious look, and spoke in the voice of a polite housebreaker, "though we are at home, remember, Susan, as you value your place, nobody must know it."

"Not know it?" cried Susan.

"Certainly not," said the wife.

"For what would the world say?" asked Mr. Pigeon.

The happy couple had remained a whole day in secret in their own house, when Mr. Pigeon, in opposition to the judicious wishes of his wife, resolved at night to take the air. He assured Mrs. Pigeon that he could never stay in the house for four-and-twenty hours together; he should die if he attempted it; he must for a brief time enjoy the out-door breeze; and added, to the astonishment of Mrs. Pigeon, that he thought no time so

genial as the three hours before, or on some occasions after midnight. Such was the libertine avowal of Mr. Pigeon—of the same Pigeon, whose landlady had given him for a character, as she thought, all the domestic virtues of a household god. "Pray ma'am," inquired Charlotte's busy maiden aunt, "what are the habits of Mr. Pigeon? He is about to marry into our family, and you'll pardon the question, what are his habits?"—"Habits!" replied the landlady; "the woman's blessed who gets Mr. Pigeon—gruel at ten, and bed at eleven." And these moral proprieties on the part of her future husband were impressed upon the brain and heart of the bride by the aunt aforesaid. "Gruel at ten, and bed at eleven," reiterated the spinster; "it seems little to speak of, child, but what a deal of happiness is insured by the custom." Mr. Pigeon, assuring his wife that he would keep aloof from all acquaintance, took his hat. Mrs. Pigeon looked at her lord with a mild mixture of matrimonial sorrow and anger. Can the female reader wonder at this? It was already half-past nine, and Mrs. Pigeon sighed as she thought of her aunt; yea, she sighed deeply at the visionary happiness of—gruel at ten, and bed at eleven.

"All men," said Susan, marking the melancholy of her mistress, "all men are alike, ma'am."

"They are, Susan," said Mrs. Pigeon.—"Where's my handkerchief?"

No: wild horses, or, what is better or worse, an Act of Parliament, should not tear away the secret which shall lie with us, wrapt in undertakers' lead. We will not point the finger of scorn at the house of Pigeon—we will not so much as wink or leer at it; the man has seen the wickedness of his ways, and why should we throw an evil name upon a habitation, probably at this moment tenanted by worthy people who honoured their father and mother, and regularly pay their rates? Houses, albeit of bricks and mortar, are delicate things, and take their character from the folks who use them; hence, we will not specify the house to which, at half-past five in the morning, Samuel Pigeon—a husband of little better than fifteen days old—took his timorous way. The sentence will fall upon the reader like a thunder-bolt—the female reader will clutch her petticoat and utter a piercing shriek—but it must be said—

Samuel Pigeon had not been home all night.

As the man crept homeward there was culprit in his looks, in his hesitating pace. He had, it was true, fallen into a most delightful party—had been so happy, so very jolly; but now, alas! it wanted only seven-and-twenty minutes to six. What a

beautiful morning!—yet what a reproach came with the bright sun! Sam blushed as he met the milk-maids: artisans, passing to their work, made him turn his head away; the chimney-sweepers, crying their noisome trade, struck him compunctious; yea, the very sparrows, chirping and playing in his path, gave him a twitch of the conscience. Let not the reader think that Samuel Pigeon had any fear of the violence of his ill-used spouse; no, she would only weep—for she was a young wife, and had not yet come to her nails. It was a nobler feeling that possessed Pigeon—not base dread, but better, repentance. He had been beguiled into cards—had, moreover, been very lucky—but what was luck at nearly six in the morning! He had held the most wonderful hands at loo, and had never played but when justified by both king and queen. And then he thought, and in the dissatisfaction of his soul almost gave vent to the words—"'Tis six in the morning—my wife is sitting up, and, compared to domestic peace, oh! what are trumps?"

Pigeon, with heavy legs, walks on; and now he approaches his door. He scrapes his shoes as tenderly as though he scraped his bare feet—he wants to cough, but he hasn't sufficient nerve to risk the operation. He looks at his knocker; the lion's head ornamenting it seems to stare with new ferocity upon him. He touches the knocker as if it were red-hot—shakes it spasmodically—tap, tap, tap—and to Pigeon the sound seems to search through a dead, deserted house—a desolate homestead. Has Charlotte gone to her family? Or, anticipating the completion of a threat to be made in after-life, has she already taken a lodging? Strange thoughts chill the heart of Pigeon, as he stands pricking his ears at his own inhospitable door. Ha! he hears a heavy, leaden step—it is Susan; in a second the door will be opened. A new, a cutting trial awaits the expectant husband.

Among other valuable presents made by kind friends to the young housewife, Mrs. Pigeon had received a remarkably beautiful cat—a cat enjoying the very best domestic reputation. Indeed, it might have been a knotty point for many tea-tables to decide whose character stood the fairest with the world, that of Mrs. Pigeon's husband—or of Mrs. Pigeon's cat. The cat had demeaned himself most worthily—was good-tempered, a vigilant mouser, and, with a kind of virtue very useful to many excellent people, was never known to dip his whiskers in forbidden cream, provided the unlawful luxury were placed beyond his leap, or carefully locked from his intruding nose. Up to the time whereof we write the cat had been a pattern cat; had he gone on as he had begun, spinsters would have sought his kittens, as jockeys sought the Eclipse colts. However, when men fall, why should

we always expect cats to keep their feet? To return to Mr. Pigeon.

The repentant husband still stands at the door, awaiting the coming of Susan. What can delay her? As he thinks this question, he feels something at the calf of his right leg, and, looking downwards, sees his large black cat, his own fireside vassal, the musical companion of his tea-kettle, the very best and glossiest of cats, rubbing his sleek yet somewhat disordered coat, in token of glad greeting, round his master's legs. In a moment Samuel Pigeon, the offending husband, acknowledged and felt, humiliated by the companionship: he blushed to find that the cat made common cause with his master. Yes!—they were fellow-offenders—co-mates in household irregularity. Then Sam thought to kick the cat, but the cat, rubbing closer, seemed to roll himself round his master's leg; and then the animal, throwing up his large green and yellow eyes (and there are times when cats' eyes are terribly human), said, as plainly as any cat could say, by mewing—"Here we are, old boy! both in for it." Now, what might have been Pigeon's answer we know not; for just as the cat concluded this accusatory truth, the door opened.

Susan looked significantly at her master and then at the cat—again she looked at puss, and again at Pigeon.

Pigeon walked into the parlour—the cat descended to the kitchen. "My dear love," said Pigeon to somebody seated in a chair, "have you sat up?" The person accosted raised a head, the sweet face shamefully eclipsed by a night-cap, and, saying nothing, looked towards an end of flickering candle. It was broad sunlight, but the candle-end, about to expire—it had, doubtless, been forgotten—was strong dramatic evidence of the lapse of time. Mrs. Pigeon rose, and, with three or more shawls upon her shoulders, was about to leave the room. "Wasn't it enough for Susan to sit up?" inquired Pigeon, timidly. There was a pause—it was a serious moment. The good genius of the wife triumphed; for, after a struggle, she overlaid her face with a look of meekness, and said—"Why, Samuel, did you not take the key?" With these words, Mrs. Pigeon retired to her chamber, and the husband sank in a chair, from the head to the toes very much ashamed of himself. We are happy to state that the touching resignation of the wife had the happiest effect upon the husband; and therefore recommend it to the adoption of all ladies. "What!" asks one, "did Mr. Pigeon never stay out late again?" "Oh yes! very often." "He did?" "Yes; but then, like a good obedient mate, he always took the key."

It was noontime on the day of Pigeon's transgression when

Captain Albatross and Mrs. Captain Albatross called to welcome the happy pair. Nothing could be more provoking,—and nothing could more strongly illustrate the theory of Susan, that every master of a house has, somewhere upon town, his perplexing double, his fatal similitude,—than the positive assertion of the Captain that Pigeon had, on the previous night, been seen with some lady, in some box, at some theatre. Mrs. Pigeon believed the story with all the bigotry of the fondest of wives. "I tell you, my love," cried Pigeon, "it must be somebody like me." "Impossible," replied the wife, "impossible: Samuel, there can be nobody like you." As Mrs. Pigeon made this flattering declaration, a prolonged knock struck through the house: a sense of danger made the couple forget a present quarrel, in their common anxiety for preservation. "We can't be at home," exclaimed Mrs. Pigeon. "Certainly not," said the husband—"'twould affront the Albatrosses for ever."

"'Tis only a lady come to see the apartments," said Susan; for the Pigeons, as yet a small family, had determined upon hospitably giving up a part of their house to any respectable person in search of shelter.

"Are you sure she's a stranger?" asked Mrs. Pigeon. "You've not seen her in the neighbourhood?"

"She looks from the country, ma'am," said Susan.

"I'll see her," said Mrs. Pigeon; and she forthwith descended to the parlour, where a lady of some fifty years old, possessing a benign aspect, considerably heightened by green spectacles, awaited her coming.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Mrs. Pigeon?" asked the lady, to the consternation of the wife; who, ere she could reply, was informed by the visitor that she "was very well known to her aunt, Figgins." Here was a dilemma! for it so happened that the Figginses were people whose strict observance of the genteel, and whose contempt of any of their dearest friends and acquaintance who might lapse into accidental vulgarity, rendered them of especial importance in the eyes of the new-made wife. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mrs. Pigeon?" This was a home-thrust; and yet, how gracefully did Mrs. Pigeon parry it!

"Mrs. Pigeon, on her marriage, went to Brighton; that is little more than a fortnight since."

"I beg your pardon," remarked the lady in spectacles; "of course, she is out of town. I am told, madam, she is a very charming woman."

Mrs. Pigeon smiled, and, in a sweet voice, begged the lady to take a chair.

"A very charming woman. Ha!" and here the lady heaved what seemed to Mrs. Pigeon a commiserating sigh, and shook her green spectacles.

"Bless me, madam!" cried the alarmed wife, "you surely know nothing of—that is, I—I understood you wished to look at the apartments?"

"I will be frank with you, madam," said the ingenuous lady; "that was my excuse."

"Excuse, madam! Then may I inquire what the real object of"——

"By all means," replied the visitor. "But first tell me, my dear—you are perhaps an early friend of Mrs. Pigeon?"

"Very early, madam," replied Mrs. Pigeon herself; "I went to school with her."

"And she is charming, and handsome, and amiable? Ha! I'm very sorry for it," said the lady, with evidently deep regret.

"Sorry, madam! why sorry?"

"To be sure, my dear," said the charitable stranger, "the man may have altered."

"Bless me!" exclaimed the terrified wife, "you don't mean Pigeon?"

"Ha! my love," and here the lady inserted her little finger under her green glass, perhaps to wipe away a tear—"ha! my love, I know what it is to have been thrown away. Though I say it, I was once beautiful." (Mrs. Pigeon cast a suspicious glance at her visitor: had she come to steal the plate?)

"I had a heart, that in its confiding innocence, believed anything." (Why did Susan let such people in?) "I, too, like the hapless Charlotte"——

"Why,—why hapless, madam?" inquired the wife.

"The interest you take in that young creature," observed the lady, with new composure, "does honour to your friendship. Why—why didn't she consult me before she married?"

"I think, madam, you inferred that Mrs. Pigeon had not the advantage of your acquaintance."

"That is very true," said the benevolent stranger; "in my zeal for her welfare, I had entirely forgotten that accident—for I must call it one."

"As I told you, madam," said the young wife, almost agitated into tears, "I am the most intimate friend Mrs. Pigeon has; if you know anything that concerns her peace of mind, I entreat of you, my dear, dear madam, to divulge it,—if you know anything against her husband"——

"Ha!" and here a sigh was almost deepened to a groan, "ha!

that man. But I wouldn't let the dear woman know it—for now she is married, my love, there's nothing to be gained by making her unhappy before her time; and that, I fear, will come soon enough."

Mrs. Pigeon suddenly threw her chair away—and, looking with a stern, inquiring eye at her visitor, and holding forth her right hand, she exclaimed in a voice of profound conviction—"Pigeon's a wretch!"

The lady stranger took a little gold snuff-box from her pocket, and calmly feeding either nostril, made answer—"He is."

"And he—he who seemed so gentle, so kind, so good!" exclaimed the wife.

"It was always his way," answered the visitor, who then abruptly rose, and performing a curtsey, said, "Madam, I wish you a very good morning."

"But, madam,—surely you have something more to say respecting the conduct of Mr. Pigeon?" asked his spouse.

"My love," replied the elderly lady, "I might say a great deal; but when you have lived in the world as long as I have, you will know what a thankless task it is to convince people of their unhappiness. Now, my dear, it is enough that you and I know the wickedness of the man; as for Mrs. Pigeon, poor fond soul! were she to see the truth itself, I'll be bound she wouldn't believe it. I presume they'll be in town in another fortnight?—I shall do myself the pleasure of calling upon dear Mrs. Pigeon; for, as an intimate friend of the Figginses"—and the kind visitor moved towards the door.

"But, madam," and the anxious wife followed the lady from the room, "may I beg to know any particular case of iniquity?"

"My dear," answered the kind woman, lowering her voice, "I could tell you fifty—but the worst of all was an affair at Tonbridge, where"——

"Yes, madam—yes, pray stay," for the lady's hand was at the door.

"At Tonbridge, where"——

At this moment a loud rattling knock at the door went to the heart of Mrs. Pigeon. They had already been denied to the Albatrosses—to the friend of the Figginses—and they could not be at home to any other visitor. It was a great trial; but Mrs. Pigeon was compelled to sacrifice her feelings as a wife to her feelings for the genteel, and to hurry back into the parlour, leaving the kind communicative lady in green spectacles to open the street-door. Susan at the same moment ascended to answer the knocker; and Mr. Pigeon, having been brought from the

drawing-room by the earnest tones of his wife in the passage, unconsciously called forth—

"Susan—who's that?"

"Oh! there is somebody at home," cried a voice; and, to the horror of Mrs. Pigeon, who double-locked the parlour door, George Tomata, a young gentleman with very great hopes in the India-house, entered the abode of Hymen.

"Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon are at Brighton," said Susan, with the confident face of a Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"However, sir," said Mr. Pigeon, descending the stairs—for his heart, from some strange cause, had bounced at the name of Tomata—"however, sir, if you have anything to communicate that materially concerns Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon—I"——

"Not in the least—no, not at all," answered Tomata, leisurely ascending the stairs, and, with Mr. Pigeon, entering the drawing-room. "So," said Tomata, flinging himself into a chair, "the Pigeons are not come home yet, eh?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon, the day of their marriage," answered Pigeon, softly, "went to Brighton."

"Ha! well, that's not three weeks yet. It's devilish odd why people run away directly they're married—as if they were ashamed of what they've done. However, it's a banishment called for by genteel life, and—of course, sir, you are intimate with Mr. Pigeon?"

"I have that pleasure, sir," said Samuel.

"You lodge here, no doubt? Excuse me, although I have not with you the pleasure—and doubtless it is a very great one—of knowing Pigeon, still I am very intimate with his little wife."

"Indeed, sir—I never heard her name"——

"I dare say not, sir; I dare say not. Oh, very intimate; we wore petticoats together. Baby companions, sir—baby companions. Used to bite the same pear."

"Really, sir," and Pigeon shifted in his seat—"I was not aware of so early and so delicate a connexion between yourself and Mrs. Pigeon."

"We were to have been married; yes, I may say, the wedding-ring was over the first joint of her finger."

"And pray, sir," asked Pigeon, with a face of crimson, "pray, sir, what accident may have drawn the ring off again?"

"You see, sir," said George Tomata, arranging his hair by an opposite mirror, "my prospects lay in India—in India, sir. Now Lotty"——

"Who, sir?" exclaimed Pigeon, wrathfully.

"Charlotte," answered Tomata. "I used to call her Lotty

and she—he! he!—she used to call me Loveapple—you may judge how far we were both gone. For when a woman plays tricks with a man's name you may be sure she begins to look upon it as her future property. As a friend of her husband, do you know what she was accustomed to call Pigeon?"

"Pigeon, sir—of course, Pigeon," replied the husband.

"Never cared for him, then, depend upon it: otherwise she'd have turned Pigeon into Turtle-dove, Pouter, Tumbler, and twenty other pretty things. True tenderness, sir, deals in synonyms."

"You are always right, sir, no doubt," observed Pigeon. "But you were about to state the particular hindrance to your marriage with"——

"To be sure. Lotty, as I was going to observe, was a nice little sugar-plum—a very nice little sugar-plum—as you will doubtless allow."

It was with some difficulty that Pigeon possessed himself of sufficient coolness to admit the familiar truth of the simile; he, however, allowed the wife of his bosom to be "a nice little sugar-plum."

"Very nice, indeed; but I saw it—I felt convinced of it, and the truth went like twenty daggers to my soul; but I discovered"——

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Pigeon, "discovered what?"

"That her complexion," replied Tomata, "beautiful as it was, would not stand Trincomalee."

"And was that your sole objection to the match?" inquired Pigeon, solemnly.

"I give you my honour as a gentleman, that I had no other motive for breaking off the marriage. Sir, I should have despised myself if I had; for, as I have observed, sir, we were both gone—very far gone, indeed."

"No doubt, sir," answered Pigeon, burning to avow himself. "But as a friend of Mr. Pigeon's, allow me to assure you that the lady was not found too far gone to admit of perfect recovery."

"I'm glad of it—very glad of it: hope it is so. By-the-way, what sort of a fellow is Pigeon? Had I been in London—I only came up yesterday—I should have looked into the match before it took place. Lotty could expect no less of me. What kind of an animal is this Pigeon?"

"Kind of an animal, sir?" stammered Pigeon. "Why, sir, he"——

"Ha! that will do," said the abrupt Tomata; "as you're his friend, I'll not press you on the point. Poor Lotty! sacrificed, I see."

"What do you mean by sacrificed, sir?" foamed Pigeon: "sacrificed!"

"I can perceive at once the kind of log the poor girl is chained to;" and Tomata mournfully shook his head in the face of the astounded Pigeon.

"Log! log!" cried the husband, with scarcely breath for the monosyllables.

"A coarse, vulgar,—still, the brute may have kindness for his poor victim," observed George Tomata.

"Brute, victim!" roared Pigeon — "I'd have you learn Mr. Loveapple"——

"What do you mean by Loveapple, sir?" asked Tomata with stern visage. "There was but one person in all the world whom I allowed to take that sweet freedom with Tomata—that person, though now another's, may, if she please, mark her recollection of former days by adopting the pleasant familiarity,—but that which I might be happy to receive at the lips of Mrs. Pigeon herself, I may feel disposed to fling back in the teeth of Mrs. Pigeon's husband's friend."

How devoutly did Pigeon curse his admiration of the genteel, that, in the first place, had exposed him to the undisguised communication of Mr. Tomata, and in the next prevented his discovering himself to the perfidious early lover of his fortnight wife! Pigeon stared aghast at his ingenuous visitor, who strode towards him with a still threatening countenance.

"I shall call when the Pigeons come home—I heard they were at home—be kind enough to let Mr. Pigeon have my card," and Mr. George Tomata flung it upon the table. "If Pigeon make my Lotty a good husband, I'll take him by the hand; if, however, I find him no gentleman,—find that he shall use the girl of my heart with harshness or with even the least unkindness"——

"Well, sir!" and Pigeon thrusting his hands in his pockets, swaggered to Tomata, "what will you do then, sir?"

"Then, sir, I shall again think the happiness of the lady placed in my hands, and thrash"——

"Her husband?" shouted Pigeon.

"Her husband," answered George Tomata; "thrash her husband—thrash him severely—very severely." And, so saying, the conditional champion ran down stairs, and quitted the house. It was a warm day, and Pigeon fell upon a chair, and with his coat-tails fanned himself.

Mrs. Pigeon, with palpitating heart, had heard the hubbub above: the retreating footsteps of George Tomata, and his final exit at the street-door, relieved her of an agony of impatience—impatience to confound her husband with a recital of his sins so

generously put at her disposal by the anonymous friend of the Figginses. How very fortunate that she had denied herself! How particularly lucky that her rigid adherence to the genteel had been the indirect means of laying bare the hidden iniquities of Pigeon! But for that auspicious circumstance, she might have gone down an injured woman to her grave, and never once have suspected it. Now, what a world of trouble had been generously opened to her! Animated by these feelings, nerved by this conviction, Mrs. Pigeon unlocked the door, and having paused for a moment to rally her disordered spirits for the conjugal contest, she was about to quit the parlour for the drawing-room, when the false, the traitorous Pigeon, stood before her.

The female reader may possibly be enabled to judge of the overwrought feelings of Mrs. Pigeon from this touching incident; she looked like a marble statue upon her husband, and, with stone-cold lips and a voice that would have petrified a pepper-pod, said—"Sir!"

Nor may the male student of this domestic history be less ignorant of the thunderstorm brewing in the breast of Pigeon, when he shall learn that that worthy man, knitting his brows and clutching his hands, ground through all his double and single teeth—"Madam!"

"Sir!"

"Madam!"

Oh, ye household gods! was there not one to call up a soothing vision—to re-awaken, from the dead past, the scene, the forms, the looks, and smiles of only fifteen days ago?—to paint the comely interior of Kennington Church—the meek parson in candid robes—the mechanical clerk, with a label in his mouth, saying, "say after me,"—the dewy eyes of female friends, the hardened looks of the already condemned, and the happy self-satisfied insolence of uncaught bachelors? Where were the bridesmaids hovering affectionately around their departing sister—where the fluttering bride, charmed down to the sweetest meekness of her sex—where the bridegroom, putting the best face on the robbery he is about to commit upon an honest family—where the stalwart beadle—where the oak-faced openers of pews? And oh! and above all, where was the sentiment of love and hope that, tuning the strings of two hearts in affectionate unison, promised they should sound for ever the self-same strain, with no discordant sharp, no deadening flat to mar the song of life? And where was Cupid, shaking in the ears of the bridesmaid a chain of wedding-rings—and where was the incorrigible Hymen, dancing a hornpipe in well-riveted fetters of the same?

Had Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon so soon forgotten this, and these, and all? Was it the same woman who moved, silently as a white cloud, from the church, who now — a little fortnight gone—towered up the Pythoness of a hearth-stone, and cried forth "Sir?" And—powers of mutability!—could it be the same deferential man, the biped personification of acquiescence and amiability, who now, at the top of his rude lungs, bellowed, "Madam?" Alas! that the chords, whereon the God or Marriage played such an epithalamium, should crack with such a twang!

"So, Mr. Pigeon!" said the injured wife; who then, incapable of pursuing the theme she had set herself, merely added, with a gush of tears, "I'll go home to my mother."

"Mrs. Pigeon," replied her husband, "you have done very wrong that you ever quitted that worthy and most respectable woman."

"What do you mean, Mr. Pigeon?" asked the wife.

"Mean!" echoed Pigeon. "Where there has been a first love, Mrs. Pigeon"——

"Oh! you barbarous creature! What—you own it? You have not even the delicacy that genteel life"——

"Delicacy, madam! But I will endeavour to master my feelings. There has been a want of candour between us, Mrs. Pigeon."

"Yes, yes!" cried Mrs. Pigeon. "I deserve it all; all my acquaintance told me it would come to this. A want of candour, indeed. But I am rightly served. This is the fruit of"——

"Fruit, ma'am!" exclaimed Pigeon, the word jarring his whole anatomy; "yes, ma'am, fruit—you may say fruit."

Mrs. Pigeon opened her pretty blue eyes, and, struck by the passion of her lord, by the tragic significance of his manner, requested to know if Mr. Pigeon intended to convey any insinuation. Whereupon Mr. Pigeon approached his wife, and, with intense bitterness, cried—"Loveapple!"

"Loveapple!" echoed the bewildered Mrs. Pigeon—"Loveapple!"

"Very well, indeed, madam; very well," cried the sarcastic husband. "Of course you never heard the name?"

"Never!" said Mrs. Pigeon, with great emphasis. "Never—that is, I"——

"Charlotte!—for the last time I may call you Charlotte—do you deny that you have ever known one George Tomata?"

"He gave me an ivory card-case brought from Canton," said the innocent wife.

"And nothing else, ma'am—nothing else? Was there no interchange of sentiment? No—no d—d first love?" cried Pigeon, wrought entirely out of genteel life by the violence of his passion. Pigeon waited for a reply.

Mrs. Pigeon subdued her emotion into scornful dignity, and simply answered—"Mr. Pigeon, you are beneath my notice."

"To be sure—the way with culprits, ma'am—the way with culprits," said the husband.

"Mr. Pigeon," cried the wife, "I see how it is—you wish to break my heart."

"No, madam," answered Pigeon. "No—I trust," and Pigeon drew himself up, "I trust, I always respect the property of—of strangers."

"Of strangers, Mr. Pigeon? But, sir, though I am your wife, you shall find I am not wholly unprotected."

"Oh, no! You have a champion, Mrs. Pigeon—in case of accidents I have his card already. You have a champion, ma'am—the knight of the elephant tooth, ma'am—the hero of the card-case—the tender synonym—the—the d—d Loveapple!" and Pigeon shook his fists and stamped about the room. "And I—I a poor believing fool! I who in courtship and in marriage have never neglected you"——

"Never?" asked Mrs. Pigeon. "Never, Mr. Pigeon?"

"No, never, ma'am—I repeat it."

At this moment the black cat mewed in the hall, and Pigeon could not repeat "never." Mrs. Pigeon read the confusion of the enemy, and immediately followed up the advantage. Twice the black cat mewed, and Pigeon was pale and dumb.

"Mr. Pigeon," said the wife, "I blush for you, that you should resort to such unworthy means of masking your own wickedness."

"My wickedness, Mrs. Pigeon!" and the husband returned to the charge; "and as for blushing, ma'am, the complexion of some people seems proof to that, whatever it might have been to another climate."

"Answer me this, madam—why did you stay in England to make me miserable? Why—I ask you—why did you not go to Trincomalee?"

"Trincomalee, Mr. Pigeon! You mean Tonbridge, sir—Tonbridge. I have heard it all, Mr. Pigeon."

"All, ma'am? Tonbridge? You are mad, ma'am—mad with unfounded jealousy, ma'am. But this shall be ended," said the husband.

"I hope it will, sir," said the wife.

"We'll separate, madam," said Mr. Pigeon.

"With more pleasure than we ever met," rejoined Mrs. Pigeon.

"And perhaps, madam, if we remain twenty years together, there will not be a more favourable moment than the present." And with this avowal, Mr. Pigeon was about to quit the parlour, resolutely bent upon his hat and gloves; when his wife, with admirable presence of mind, placed herself before the door.

"Mr. Pigeon," she said, repressing her tears, "whatever we may decide upon for ourselves, let us not forget what is due to genteel society. If you leave the house in broad daylight, it must be known that we are in town. At least, let us try to wear away a month, and then separate respectably."

"Agreed, madam—agreed!" said Pigeon. "I have been denied to my excellent godfather, Albatross—a childless man with ten New River shares—and how he might resent the falsehood, I know not. As you suggest, we will remain hidden for a month, and then separate for ever."

"You will keep fixed to that, I trust, Mr. Pigeon?" asked the wife.

"Immutably," answered the husband.

"They went to Brighton a fortnight ago," said the glib Susan to a new inquirer, whose modest knock had not, in their contention, been heard by the denied couple.

"Hush!" cried Mrs. Pigeon to her husband; and they both listened for the voice of the visitor.

"A fortnight ago," repeated the unflinching domestic, "and of course they won't be in town till the month's up. It would'nt be genteel."

"I heard that Mr. Pigeon was seen last night," said a lady at the door.

"My aunt!" cried Mrs. Pigeon. "I know she's made her will—I must see her."

"Impossible!" said Pigeon. "I cannot be compromised with Albatross."

"But are you sure they're not in town?" asked a gentleman.

"Your uncle!" exclaimed Mr. Pigeon.

"I'd a letter from 'em only this morning, sir," said the valuable Susan, "with orders about the gold-fish and canary-birds."

"We have walked some way," said the male visitor, stepping hastily into the hall, and at the same time laying his hand upon the parlour door, "so we'll stay and rest a little;" and with these words the respectable uncle and aunt walked into the apartment, followed by Susan, who, with amazed looks, stared round the room, and then threw her eyes suspiciously towards

the fireplace. Had Mr. and Mrs. Pigeon flown up the chimney? Another glance, and Susan was satisfied of their whereabout; they were both squeezed in a corner cupboard—in a nook particularly incommodious for people about to separate for ever. However, as the door was opened by her uncle, Mrs. Pigeon had flown to the narrow sanctuary, and Mr. Pigeon, generously laying aside all difference of opinion in his pursuit of safety, immediately followed her. Fear must have a very contractile power, or that cupboard had never contained both the Pigeons.

"Furnished with very tolerable taste," said the uncle, as he surveyed the appointments of the room.

"All the taste belongs to my niece, no doubt," said the aunt. "Everything very handsome; though I can't say much for the article that decorates the chimney-piece." Pigeon winced, for he knew that the lady spoke of his portrait.

"Hang it! the frame's handsome," answered the liberal uncle "and the picture itself very like the man."

"Oh! deplorably like him," rejoined the aunt. "Poor Charlotte! I hope she'll be happy—I hope her heart's in the match; —but, for my own part, I think it a great sacrifice. No, no— young Tomata was the man."

"So I should have thought; but if the wench preferred Pigeon she was right to have him. And, after all, Tomata's fortune lies in expectation, and Pigeon, though the last person as I conceive for a woman to love, has a certainty." Thus spoke Charlotte's uncle.

"Well, I hope 'twill all end well," said the aunt. "Fortunately, Charlotte has been piously brought up, and has, I believe, been taught the virtue of resignation. When they come home, we must of course ask the creature of a husband to dinner." A loud, oft-repeated knock startled the aunt and uncle, and struck new terror to the two hearts in the cupboard.

"Not come home yet, eh?" questioned Captain Albatross, in his loudest voice.

"At Brighton, sir. I said this morning, sir, at Brighton," answered the invincible Susan.

"At Brighton, eh? Ha! we shall see;" and the martial tread of the Captain sounded in the hall, followed by other footsteps, and in a moment he flung open the parlour-door, and entered, accompanied by Mrs. Albatross and Mr. George Tomata. "Ha! my dear Mr. Figgins—Mrs. Figgins, I am yours. So, they have come home, I presume?"

"No—no, indeed, Captain," said Uncle Figgins: "we have only taken shelter here. We certainly heard that they were at home—heard that Pigeon had been seen."

"I am pretty sure I saw him last night—I am almost certain of it," said the Captain.

"Now, Edward," said Mrs. Albatross, "why will you be so positive? As I said, may you not be mistaken? Were I to believe all about those macaroons, how very unhappy"——

"Leonora!" exclaimed the Captain, and his wounded sensibility showed itself in his relaxed features; "again macaroons!"

"Very odd," said Mr. Figgins, "because nobody," and he glanced at the portrait, "nobody could mistake that face."

"So it appears to me," said the Captain. "Splendid fellow! isn't he?"

"Eh?" asked Figgins, with an incredulous look, for he doubted the seriousness of Albatross.

"Splendid fellow—not regularly handsome; but very fine. My godson, Mr. Figgins, shall have all I have."

"I was remarking," said Mrs. Figgins, "before you came, that there was a certain expression in that portrait very, very superior to regular beauty."

"Splendid fellow!" repeated the Captain. "I knew his mother, ma'am, before she married; but I was ordered with my regiment into Kent, and absence, you know"——

"Edward!" cried Mrs. Albatross.

"I have done. Now to business: depend upon it, there's some mystery here. It is, after all, scarcely to be thought that Pigeon is in town: for I never can believe that Samuel Pigeon, my godson that is, my son that ought to have been, would"——

"Captain Albatross," exclaimed the Captain's lady, "I must leave the room."

"Would have denied himself to me. Could I think so, I'd disinherit him this minute. I'd"——

Another loud knock at the street-door; Susan answered the call, and was about to assure a lady—the self-same visitor who had had so interesting an interview with Mrs. Pigeon—that "her master and mistress were at Brighton," when the new-comer inquired "if Mr. and Mrs. Figgins were not in the house?" Another minute, and the lady walked into the parlour.

"Mrs. Blight!" cried Mrs. Figgins, and she rose to welcome the visitor in green spectacles. "Who'd have thought to see you?"

"I have been to your house, and they told me you were come here," said Mrs. Blight.

"How good of you to follow us!" remarked Mrs. Figgins.

"Oh! this is not my first visit to-day," observed the self-complacent Mrs. Blight. "I heard of the marriage, and came straight from the coach."

"And did you see Pigeon?" asked Captain Albatross.

"Oh, no! he's at Brighton; but I saw a female here," answered Mrs. Blight.

"What, the servant? No! A female!—what kind of person?"

"Why, for my own part, I should say rather a plain young woman," answered Mrs. Blight. "A person assuming genteel airs, with no real pretensions to them."

("Be quiet, my dear—pray be quiet," whispered Pigeon to his wife in the cupboard.)

"She was a friend, she told me, of Mrs. Pigeon's.—If such are her friends, I—well, well, perhaps Henry deserves it."

"Henry!" exclaimed Captain Albatross; "what Henry?"

"Henry Pigeon," answered Mrs. Blight; "ha! that was a sad affair at Tonbridge!"

"Why, Henry Pigeon's gone to New Zealand," cried Mrs. Figgins; "it's Samuel."

"Is it, indeed?" asked the serene Mrs. Blight; "however, it's all the same. I thought I'd call to see the couple if at home, and if not to have a peep at the furniture."

"And you saw a lady here?" asked Albatross. "This deepens the mystery—for Tomata, whom I luckily ran against, has been here this morning, and found a gentleman."

"No, no—I didn't say gentleman," cried Tomata. "D—n it! I hope I know the breed better: he seemed a sort of mixture of the haberdasher and the sheriff's-officer."

("Never mind the coxcomb, love!" whispered Mrs. Pigeon to her agitated spouse.)

"A man in the house!" cried all the ladies.

"And a strange woman!" added Mrs. Blight. "The place will be stripped, and the dear couple ruined."

"I had some fun with the fellow, to sound him, for he told me he was Pigeon's friend—if true, poor Charlotte!" said Tomata.

"Somebody got into the house to rob it!" cried Mrs. Albatross.

"Really, now I recollect," said Tomata, "I think his person did answer a description lately given of a fellow in a paragraph, beginning, 'Caution to families.'"

"Where's the maid?" exclaimed Mrs. Figgins; and the maid was loudly summoned to the parlour.

"Now, girl," said the stern Albatross, "'tis useless to deny it—you have somewhere hidden a man in the house."

"And a woman," shrieked the ladies, evidently wishing to make the iniquity complete.

"Where are they?—Tomata," said Albatross, "step out and

get an officer. You wicked, unworthy domestic, where is the man ?—where the woman ?"

Susan, with unabashed face, raised her forefinger, and pointed it steadily towards the corner cupboard.

"Ha ! ha ! then we've caught ye !" exclaimed Albatross, and he tore open the door.

"Charlotte !"

"Samuel !"

"Mr. Pigeon !"

Such were the exclamations of the Albatrosses and Figginses, echoed by Mrs. Blight and George Tomata.

"My dear Charlotte, why did you deny yourself ?—why hide in such a place ?" asked Mrs. Figgins.

"Samuel, what is all this ?" inquired Albatross ; "why keep your arrival secret from your friends ?"

"The fact is, Captain Albatross," answered Pigeon, "we were tired of Brighton, but we felt it wasn't genteel to return before the month ; and as we were denied to one, we were compelled to be denied to another ; and so we went on until at last, we—we"——

Samuel Pigeon was ashamed to confess the truth—a truth too frequently and too gravely illustrated ; for how often do we see simple Pigeons in search of what they ignorantly consider the genteel, compelled at length to take shelter in—a corner cupboard ?

SHAKSPEARE IN CHINA.

I cannot tell that the wisest Mandarin now living in China is not indebted for part of his energy and sagacity to Shakspeare and Milton, even though it should happen that he never heard of their names.

Godwin's Essay on Sepulchres.

We do great injustice to the College of Mandarins, if we think that body at the present time ignorant of the marvels of Shakspeare. No: Canton has produced its commentator, and by means of his explanatory genius it is hoped that in a few years the whole Celestial Empire will, in the fulness of its knowledge, bow to the majesty of the poet. At this moment we have before us a radiant evidence of the admission of the Great Teacher into the Sacred City: believe it, astounded reader, Shakspeare has gone farther than Nieuhoff. England, however —that England, who has shown herself such an idolatress of her darling son—who has encircled the house in which he first drew breath with a golden rail—who has secured it from possible destruction at the hands of the bigot, by making it the property of the state *—that England, who, when the tree planted by the bard was felled by the axe, wept as she turned the timber into 'bacco-stoppers—that England, who, even at the present time, only a little more than two centuries after his death, has already begun to think of the propriety of erecting, at some future day, a national monument to her poet—that England cannot, after the many and affecting instances of her deep maternal love toward her most illustrious child, refuse to aid in the dissemination of Shakspearanity in any corner of the world, but at the present interesting crisis, more particularly in the empire of China.

The cry that the Chinese are not yet fit for Shakspeare—a cry raised in the same acute spirit in which people in chains have

* The Mulberry-tree was cut down: and the race of Gastrels is not extinct.

been said not to be fit for freedom—can, we think, have no bad effect on even moderately liberal men, after the production of papers now beneath our hands. All we ask of the foreign minister is a company, to act either on board Chinese junks or on shore, as the intellectual wants of his Majesty may require; nay, if under the direction of their own stage-manager, to exhibit themselves at any distance in the interior. The company to be paid and clothed by the government for whose benefit they act, with this condition, that they be subject to the laws and customs of the Chinese, obediently shaving their eyebrows and letting their tails grow. For the passing difficulty of the language, that we have no doubt will soon be overcome; many of the actors, we religiously believe it, speaking and playing equally well in English or in Chinese. We now come to the proofs of the fit condition of the people for Shakspeare—for that which they will "hail as a boon," and which we shall part with as a drug.

Some months since, it was our fortune to be present at an auction of curiosities from the East—shells, parrots, rice-paper, chopsticks, japanned cabinets, and cut-throat sparrows. Our friend Peregrine—he had just arrived from the Great Pyramid, from the top of which, and by means of a most excellent glass, he had discovered, and after made captive, three giraffes—bade money for a picture. As it was a scene from Shakspeare there were of course no opposing bidders, and he became the owner of what proved to be an exquisite evidence of Chinese art and imitation; in brief, no other than a copy, faithfully drawn, and most brilliantly coloured, by an artist at Canton, of the Boydell picture of Falstaff in the Buck-basket, and the Merry Wives. The picture, however, proved in itself to be of little value compared to the essay found to be inserted at the back between the picture and the frame; being written on paper, half a quire of which would not exceed the thickness of a butterfly's wing, it is no wonder that the treasure escaped even the meritorious vigilance of an auctioneer. It is this essay that we now propose to submit to the reader, in evidence of the condition of China for an instant export of a company of fine Shakspearian actors. When we state that the essay has been printed by its author in at least one of the Canton journals, the dissemination and adoption of the principles comprised in it, over the whole of China, cannot for half a moment be a matter of doubt.

We regret that we cannot wholly acquit our intelligent Mandarin of the taint of ingratitude. It is evident that his views of English history—at least of that portion in which Falstaff conspicuously appears, for the writer suffers no subject

to escape in any way involved in the character of the immortal knight—have been gathered from one of our fellow-countrymen; he has, if we may be allowed to say it, sucked the brain as a "weasel sucks eggs," of some enlightened but obscure supercargo, whom he has left unhonoured and unthanked. How different, in a similar case, was the conduct of an Englishman: our deep veneration of the national character will not, at this happy moment, suffer us to be silent on the grateful magnanimity of Mr. Nahum Tate, who, in his preface to his improved version of "King Lear," returns his "thanks to an *ingenious friend* who first pointed out the tragedy" to his condescending notice! The silence of the Mandarin towards his instructor is the more strange, as ingratitude is not the vice of the barbarian. An ingenious friend points out a skulking, unarmed straggler to a Cossack; the soldier makes him prisoner, cuts off his ears, slits his nose, bores his tongue, and, having mounted the captive behind him, in the cordial spirit of Nahum Tate, "thanks his ingenious friend" for his information! But it is so; in this particular our Mandarin fails in comparison with the Cossack and with Nahum Tate.

We now lay before the reader the Essay of Ching the Mandarin, who, it will be seen in his orders to the painter employed to copy the original picture—by whom taken to China remains unknown—has, with national exactness, given the birth and education not only of the author of Falstaff, but of Falstaff himself, together with glancing notices of—Windsor wives and Windsor soap.

It is, perhaps, only due to the translator, to state that by our express solicitation he has a little lowered the orientalism of the original, whilst he has at the same time endeavoured to preserve the easy, conversational tone of the educated Chinese.

"CHING TO TING.

"I send, O Ting, from the barbarian ship, a picture of barbarians. Make one for your friend, like unto it; in size, in shape, and colour, even the same. But why should I waste words with Ting, whose pencil is true as the tongue of Confutzee? No; I will straightway deliver to him all my studies have made known to me of the barbarians, written on the canvass before him: for how can even Ting paint the faces of barbarians in their very truth, if he know not the history not only of themselves but of their fathers?

"The he barbarian with the big belly was called Forlstoff, and in time was known as Surgeon Forlstoff: from which, there is no

doubt, he was a skilful leech in the army of the barbarian king, more of whom in good season. Forlstoff's father was one Shak, or Shake, Speare or Spear; for there have been great tumults among the barbarians about the *e*. In nothing does the ignorance of the English barbarians more lamentably discover itself than in the origin they obstinately give to their Shakspeare; who, according to them, was, like the great Brahme, hatched in an egg on the bank of a river, as may be seen in a thousand idle books in which he is called the 'swan of Haveone.' And this conceit was further manifested in the building of a place called 'the Swan Theatre,' where the barbarians were wont to worship. There is little known of Shakspeare's wife, Forlstoff's mother, and that little proves her to have been an idle person, given to great sleep and sloth, as is shown by her getting nothing at the death of her husband but his 'second-best bed.'

"If Forlstoff would not, at a later time of life, leave off stealing, there is little doubt that he owed the fault to his father Shakspeare, who was forced to fly to London, which is a sacred city for all thieves, for having stolen an antelope, an animal consecrated to the higher kind of barbarians, and which it is death for the poor to touch. Indeed, the flesh of the antelope is to be eaten with safety by very few of the barbarians, it having killed even many of their Eldermen immediately after dinner.

"When Shakspeare came to London he was poor and without friends, and he held the horses of the rich barbarians who came to worship at a temple on the banks of the river. In time he learned to make shoes for the horses; and in such esteem are the shoes still held by the barbarians, that they are bought at any price, and nailed at the threshold of their houses and barns; for where they are nailed, the foolish natives think no fire, no pestilence will come, and no evil thing have any strength. Such is the silly idolatry of the barbarians.

"At length Shakspeare got admitted into the temple; and there he showed himself master of the greatest arts; and he wrote charms upon paper which, it is said, will make a man weep or laugh with very happiness,—will bring spirits from the sky and devils from the water,—will open the heart of a man and show what creeps within it,—will now snatch a crown from a king, and now put wings to the back of a beggar. And all this they say Shakspeare did, and studied not. No, beloved Ting, he was not like Sing, who, though but a poor cowherd, became wise by poring on his book spread between the horns of his cow, he travelling on her back.

"And Shakspeare proceeded in his marvels, and he became rich; and even the queen of the barbarians was seen to smile

at him, and once, with a burning look, to throw her glove at him; but Shakspeare, it is said, to the discomfiture of the queen, returned the glove, taking no further notice of the amatory invitation.

"In a ripe season of his life, Shakspeare gave up conjuring, and returned to the village on the banks of the river Haveone, where, as it is ignorantly believed, he was hatched, and where he lived in the fulness of fortune. He had laid down his conjuring rod and taken off his gown, and passed for nothing more than a man, and it is said—though you, beloved Ting, who see the haughty eyes and curling noses of the lesser man mandarins, can, after what I have writ of Shakspeare, hardly believe it—thought himself nothing more.

"Shakspeare built himself a house and planted a tree. The house is gone, but the barbarians preserve bricks of it in their inner chambers, even—I tremble as I pen it—as we preserve the altars of our gods.

"The tree was cut down by a fakir in a brain fever, but the wood is still worshipped. And this, O Ting! I would not ask you to believe, had not your own eyes witnessed that wonderful tree,* the leaves whereof falling to the ground, become mice! Hence, learn, that the leaves of Shakspeare's mulberry have become men, and on a certain day every year, with mulberry boughs about their heads, their bodies clothed in their richest garments, they chant praises to the memory of Shakspeare, and drink wine to his name.

"Shakspeare—Forlstoff's father, and the father of a hundred lusty sons and daughters, such as until that time had never been born, Shakspeare—died! He was buried in a chest of cedar, set about with plates of gold. On one of these plates was writ some magic words; for thieves, breaking into the grave, were fixed and changed to stone; and are now to be seen even as they were first struck by the charm of the magician. And so much, beloved Ting, of Shakspeare, Forlstoff's father."

That our mandarin has herein displayed very popular abilities for the difficult task of a commentator, no one who has read many volumes of Shaksperian commentaries will, we believe, deny. It is observable that in many instances he makes his facts; a custom of particular advantage to the indulgence of the most peculiar opinions and conclusions. We have read some writers who, deprived of this privilege, would really have nothing to write upon. The pleasure of making a giant, great as it

* See Navarrete's "China" for the account of this tree; underneath which, we humbly suggest, it would be as well to keep a cat.

possibly may be, cannot be comparable to the delight of killing him, our own handiwork. If, however, our reader will bear with us, we will proceed with the labours of Ching on the character of Falstaff, and on those personages and events, directly and indirectly, associated with his glorious name. Falstaff in China! Jack Falstaff on a regimen of rice!

"Forlstoff was born in the third hour of the morning; and at his birth, the roundness of his belly, and the whiteness of his head, betokened his future greatness. But little is known of his early life; save that he assisted in the temples of the barbarians, where his voice, once remarkable for its sweetness, became broken with the zeal of the singer. He then travelled with a juggler; and—if lying were not the especial vice of the barbarians—did greater wonders than even our own Yiyi. The Eldermen of London—so named because chosen from the oldest inhabitants—are known by a ring upon the thumb; this ring, Forlstoff, to the admiration of the barbarian court, crept through and through like any worm, and was promoted by the king therefore. I should, however, do evil unto truth did I not advise you, O Ting, that this feat of Forlstoff seems greater than it really is: for a tame eagle being kept in the court of the king, it was afterwards discovered that a talon of the bird was something thicker than the waist of the said Forlstoff.

"It is certain that Forlstoff, a short time after his feat with the ring, became a student in a place called Clemency Inn; which, as its name implies, is a temple wherein youths study to become meek and merciful, to love all men as brothers of their own flesh, and to despise the allurements of wealth. There was with him another student, called Robert Shaller, who afterwards became a Mandarin, or, in the barbarian tongue, a justice of the peace; being promoted to that office because he was like a double radish, and had his head carved with a knife. He was, when at Clemency Inn, drest in an eel-skin, and used to sleep in a lute-case. He lent Forlstoff what the barbarians call a thousand pounds, which Forlstoff was honest enough to—acknowledge.

"I next find Forlstoff in company with one Princeal—the son of the barbarian king, and several thieves. Forlstoff—and here the vice of his father, Shakspeare, breaks out in the child—tempts the king's son to turn robber. He is, however, so ashamed of the wickedness, that he goes about it with a mask on his face, as a king's son ought.

"Forlstoff falls into disgrace with Princeal, and is sent by him, with soldiers, to Coventry; that being a place in the barbarian country, where no man speaks to his neighbour. After some

delay, Forlstoff marches through Coventry, to fight one Pursy, who can ride up a straight hill, and is therefore called Hotspur. Forlstoff fights with him by—that is, near a clock, and kills him, Princeal, the king's son, meanly endeavouring to deprive Forlstoff of the honour.

"After the battle, Forlstoff goes to dine with the king at Wincer, which is the royal manufactory for soap. Forlstoff pretends to love two wives at the same time, and is put by them in what is called by the barbarians, a *buck*-basket, that is a basket for the finer sort of barbarians, their word *buck* answering to our *push*, and meaning high, handsome, grand. He is flung into the river, and saves himself by swimming to a garter. He is afterwards punished, by being turned into the royal forest with horns upon his head, and chains upon his hands. Princeal, in time, becomes king, and discards Forlstoff, who goes home—goes to bed—does nothing but look at the ends of his fingers, talks of the green fields about Wincer, and dies.

"For the habits of Forlstoff, if they were not quite as virtuous as those of Fo, it was, perhaps, the fault of his times; for we have his own words to prove that they were once those of the best barbarians. He swore but few oaths—gambled but once a day—paid his debts four times—and took recreation only when he cared for it. He loved sack—a liquor that has puzzled the heads of the learned—without eggs, and was extraordinarily temperate in bread.

"His companions were thieves of the highest repute—but all, unhappily, died, and left no sons!

"You will now, oh, wise and virtuous Ting, directed by these few and feeble words, paint me the picture of Forlstoff and his two wives."

We put it to the impartial reader whether Ching, in the above estimate of the character of Falstaff, has not entitled himself to take rank with many Shakspearian commentators; and whether, if the foreign minister will not consent to ship a company of English actors to Canton, Ching should not be invited by the patrons of the British drama to preside in a London theatre.

THE ORDER OF POVERTY.

WHY should not Lazarus make to himself an order of tatters? Why should not poverty have its patch of honour? Wherefore should not the undubbed knights of evil fortune carry about them, with a gracious humility, the inevitable types of their valorous contest with the Paynim iniquities of life? Wherefore may not man wear indigence as proudly as nobility flashes its jewels? Is there not a higher heraldry than that of the college?

Not a very long time ago, the King of Greece awarded to an Englishman the Order of the Redeemer. The Englishman did not reject the gift; he did not stare with wonder, or smile in meek pity at the grave mockery of the distinction; but winning the consent of our Sovereign Lady Victoria to sport the jewel, the Knight of Christ—knight by the handiwork of the King of Greece—hung about him the Order of the Redeemer!

And what may be the gracious discipline of this Order of Redemption? Has the new Knight sold off all that he had, and given the money to the poor? We have heard of no such broker's work: and surely the newspaper tongue would have given loud utterance to the penitence of Mammon. What discipline, then, does this Order of Christ compel upon its holy and immaculate brotherhood? What glorifying services towards the heart and spirit of man—what self-martyrdom does it recompense? Is it the bright reward of humility—of active loving-kindness towards everything that breathes? Is it, that the knighted, beyond ten thousand thousand men, has proved the divine temper of the spiritual follower of Jesus, making his hourly life an active goodness, and with every breath drawn, drawing nearer to rewarding Heaven? Surely, the order of the Redeemer—that awful, solemn badge, setting apart its wearer from the sordid crowd of earth—could only be vouchsafed to some hard Christian service,—could only reward some triumphant wrestling of the suffering soul—some wondrous victory in the

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forlorn hope of this dark struggling life. These are our thoughts —these our passionate words; whereupon, the Herald of the Court of Greece—a grave, fantastic wizard—with mildly-reproving look and most delicate speech, says—"You are wrong: quite wrong. The Order of the Redeemer, though by no means the first Order, is a very pretty Order in its way. Six months since we gave it to Captain Jonquil, from Paris; and truly no man more deserved the Order of the Redeemer. He taught His Majesty's infantry the use of the bayonet: his howitzer practice, too, is a divine thing. Captain Jonquil is a great soldier. Last week, the Order of the Redeemer was also bestowed upon Andreas; a great favourite at court—but, if the naughty truth must be told, a pimp."

Alas! is heraldry always innocent of blasphemy?

On the 13th of June, 1843, a grave masque—a solemn ceremony—was held at the Court of St. James's. Heraldry again looked smug and pompous. A Knight was to be made of "the most ancient Order of the Thistle." Let us make a clean breast of our ignorance; we assert nothing against the antiquity of the Thistle; for what we know, it may be as old—ay, as old as asses. But upon the glad 13th of June, a Chapter was held, and John, Marquis of ——, and the Right Hon. William, Earl of ——, were elected Knights. They of course took the oaths to protect and succour distressed maidens, orphans, and widows; to abstain from every sort of wrong, and to do every sort of right.

"The Marquis of —— then kneeling near the Sovereign, and Mr. Woods on his knee, presenting to the Queen the riband and jewel of the Order, Her Majesty was graciously pleased to place the same over the noble Marquis's left shoulder. His Lordship rising, kissed the Sovereign's hand, and having received the congratulations of the Knights brethren, retired."

From that moment, John, Marquis of ——, looked and moved with the aspect and bearing of a man, radiant with new honours. He was a Knight of the Thistle; and the jewel sparkling at his bosom feebly typified the bright, admiring looks of the world—the gaze of mingled love and admiration bent upon him. But on this earth—in this abiding place of equity—men do not get even thistles for nothing. It may, indeed, happen, that desert may pant and moan without honour; but in the court of kings, where justice weighs with nicest balance, honour never with its smiles mocks imbecility, or gilds with outward lustre a concealed rottenness. Honour never gives alms, but awards justice. Mendicancy, though with liveried lackies clustering at its carriage,—and there is such pauperism,—may whine and pray its hardest, yet move not the inflexible herald. He awards those

jewels to virtue, which virtue has sweated, bled for. And it is with this belief, yea, in the very bigotry of the creed, we ask—what has John, Marquis of ——, fulfilled to earn his thistle? What, the Right Hon. William, Earl of ——? What dragon wrong has either overcome? What giant Untruth stormed in Sophist Castle? What necromantic wickedness baffled and confounded? Yet, these battles have been fought—these triumphs won; oh! who shall doubt them? Be sure of it, ye unbelieving demagogues—scoffing plebeians, not for nothing nobility browses upon thistles.

We pay all honour to these inventions, these learned devices of the Herald. They doubtless clothe, comfort, and adorn humanity, which, without them, would be cold, naked, shrunk, and squalid. They, moreover, gloriously attest the supremacy of the tame, the civilised man, over the wild animal. The Orders of the Herald are *tattoo* without the pain of puncture. The New Zealander carries his knighthood, lined and starred and flowered in his visage. The civilised knight hangs it more conveniently on a riband.

We are such devout believers in the efficacy of Orders, that we devote this small essay to an attempt to make them, under some phase or other, universal. We will not linger in a consideration of the Orders already dead; lovely was their life, and as fragrant is their memory. There was one Order—Teutonic, if we mistake not—the Order of Fools. There was a quaint sincerity in the very title of this brotherhood. Its philosophy was outspeaking; and more than all, the constitution of such a chapter admitted knights against whose worthiness, whose peculiar right to wear the badge, no envious demagogue could say his bitter saying. Surely, in our reverence for the wisdom of antiquity, this Order might have resurrection. The Fool might have his bauble newly varnished—his cap newly hung with tinkling bells. Some of us chirp and cackle of the wisdom of the bygone day; but that is only wisdom which jumps with our own cunning; which fortifies us in the warm and quiet nook of some hallowed prejudice. From the mere abstract love of justice, we should be right glad to have the Order of Fools revived in the fullest splendour of Folly. Such an Order would so beneficently provide for many unrewarded public idlers—ay, and public workers.

There was a time, when the world in its first childhood needed playthings. Then was the Herald the world's toy-maker, and made for it pretty little nick-knacks—golden fleeces, stars, ribands, and garters; tempting the world to follow the kickshaws, as nurse with sugared bread-and-butter tempts the yeanling to

try its tottering feet. The world has grown old—old and wise: yet is not the Herald bankrupt, but like a pedlar at a fair, draws the hearts of simple men after the shining, silken glories in his box. Meanwhile, philosophy in hodden grey, laughs at the crowd, who bellow back the laugh, and sometimes pelt the reverend fool for his irreligious humour; for he who believes not in Stars and Garters is unbeliever; to the world's best and brightest faith, atheist and scoffer.

Is it not strange that a man should think the better of himself for a few stones glittering in his bosom? That a costly band about the leg should make the blood dance more swiftly through the arteries? That a man seeing his breast set with jeweller's stars, should think them glorious as the stars of heaven,—himself, little less than an earthly god, so deified? If these things be really types and emblems of true greatness, what rascal poverty besets the man without them! How is he damned in his baseness! What mere offal of humanity, the biped without an Order! And, therefore, let stars be multiplied; and let nobility—like bees—suck honey from Thistles!

We are, however, confirmed in our late failing faith. We are bigoted to Orders. Men, like watches, must work the better upon jewels. Man is, at the best, a puppet; and is only put into dignified motion when pulled by Blue or Red Ribands. Now, as few, indeed, of us can get stars, garters, or ribands, let us have Orders of our own. Let us, with invincible self-complacency, ennoble ourselves.

In the hopeless ignorance and vulgarity of our first prejudice, we might possibly want due veneration for the Golden Fleece; an ancient and most noble Order, worn by few. Yet with all our worst carelessness towards the Order, we never felt for it the same pitying contempt we feel towards an Order worn by many—not at their button-holes, not outside their breasts, but in the very core of their hearts,—the order of the Golden Calf.

Oh! bowelless Plutus, what a host of Knights! What a lean-faced, low-browed, thick-jowled, swag-bellied brotherhood! Deformity, in all its fantastic variety, meets in the Chapter. They wear no armour of steel or brass, but are cased in the magic mail of impenetrable Bank-paper. They have no sword, no spear, no iron mace with spikes; but they ride merrily into the fight of life, swinging about gold-gutted purses, and levelling with the dust rebellious poverty. These are the Knights of the Golden Calf. It is a glorious community. What a look of easy triumph they have! With what serene self-satisfaction they measure the wide distance between mere paupers—the Knights of the Order of Nothing—and themselves! How they walk the

earth as if they alone possessed the patent of walking upright! How they dilate in the light of their own gold, like adders in the sun!

A most fatal honour is this Order of the Golden Calf. It is worn unseen, as we have said, in the hearts of men; but its effects are visible: the disease speaks out in every atom of flesh —poor human worm's-meat!—and throbs in every muscle. It poisons the soul; gives the eye a squint; takes from the face of fellow-man its God-gifted dignity, and makes him a thing to prey upon; to work, to use up; to reduce to so much hard cash; then to be put up, with a wary look of triumph, into the pocket. This Order damns with a leprosy of soul its worshipper. It blinds and deafens him to the glories and the harmonies ministrant to poorer men. His eye is jaundiced, and in the very stars of God he sees nought but twinkling guineas.

At this moment great is the Order throughout the land! Tyrannous its laws, reckless its doings. It is strong, and why should it be just? To be of this Order is now the one great striving of life. They alone are men who wear the jewel—wretches they without it. Man was originally made from the dust of the earth: he is now formed of a richer substance: the true man is made of gold. Yes, the regenerate Adam is struck only at the Mint.

The Knights of the Order of the Golden Calf have no formal ceremony of election; yet has brother Knight almost instinctive knowledge of brother. In the solitude of his own thoughts is he made one of the community; in utter privacy he kisses the pulseless hand of Plutus, and swears to his supremacy. The oath divorces him from pauper-life — from its cares, its wants, its sympathies. He is privileged from the uneasiness of thought, the wear and tear of anxiety for fellow-man; he is compact, and self-concentrated in his selfishness. Nought ruffles him that touches not that inmost jewel of his soul, his knighthood's Order.

In the olden day, the Knights of the Fleece, the Garter, and other glories, won their rank upon the battle-field,—blood and strife being to them the handmaids of honour. The chivalry of the Golden Calf is mild and gentle. It splits no brain-pan, spills no blood; yet is it ever fighting. We are at the Exchange. Look at that easy, peaceful man. What a serenity is upon his cheek! What a mild lustre in his eye! How plainly is he habited! He wears the livery of simplicity and the look of peace. Yet has he in his heart the Order of the Golden Calf. He is one of Mammon's boldest heroes. A very soldier of fortune. He is now fighting — fighting valorously. He has come armed with a bran-new lie—a falsehood of surpassing

temper, which with wondrous quietude he lays about him making huge gashes in the money-bags of those he fights with. A good foreign lie, well finished and well mounted, is to this Knight of the Golden Calf as the sword of Faëry to Orlando. With it he sometimes cuts down giant fortunes; and after, "grinds their bones to make his bread."

And there are small esquires and pages of the Order; men who, with heart-felt veneration, lick their lips at the Golden Calf, and with more than bridegroom yearning pant for possession. These small folk swarm like summer-gnats; and still they drone the praises of the Calf; and looking at no other thing, have their eyes bleared and dazzled to all beside.

The Knights of the Golden Calf shed no blood; that is, the wounds they deal bleed inwardly, and give no evidence of homicide. They are, too, great consumers of the marrow of men; and yet they break no bones, but by a trick known to their Order, extract without fracture, precious nutriment. They are great alchemists, too; and turn the sweat of unrequited poverty, ay, the tears of childhood, into drops of gold.

Much wrong, much violence, much wayward cruelty—if the true history of knighthood were indicted—lies upon the Fleece, the Garter, yes, upon the Templars' Lamb;—yet all is but as May-day pastime to the voracity, the ignorance, the wilful selfishness, the bestial lowings, of the Golden Calf. And of this Order, the oldest of the brotherhood are the most gluttonous. There is one whose every fibre is blasted with age. To the imagination his face is as a coffin-plate. Yet is he all belly. As cruel as a cat, though toothless as a bird!

Oh, ye knights, great and small—whether expanding on the mart, or lying *perdu* in back-parlours—fling from your hearts the Order there, and feel for once the warmth of kindly blood! The brotherhood chuckle at the adjuration. Well, let us fight the Order with an Order.

The Order of Poverty against the order of the Golden Calf!

Will it not be a merry time, when men, with a blithe face and open look, shall confess that they are poor? When they shall be to the world what they are to themselves? When the lie, the shuffle, the bland, yet anxious hypocrisy of seeming, and seeming only, shall be a creed forsworn? When Poverty asserts itself, and never blushes and stammers at its true name, the Knights of the Calf must give ground. Much of their strength, their poor renown, their miserable glory, lies in the hypocrisy of those who would imitate them. They believe themselves great, because the poor, in the very ignorance of the dignity of poverty, would ape their magnificence.

The Order of Poverty! How many sub-orders might it embrace! As the spirit of Gothic chivalry has its fraternities, so might the Order of Poverty have its distinct devices.

The Order of the Thistle! That is an order for nobility—a glory to glorify marquisate or earldom. Can we not, under the rule of Poverty, find as happy a badge?

Look at this peasant. His face bronzed with mid-day toil. From sunrise to sunset, with cheerful looks and uncomplaining words, he turns the primal curse to dignity, and manfully earns his bread in the sweat of his brow. Look at the fields around! Golden with blessed corn. Look at this bloodless soldier of the plough—this hero of the sickle. His triumphs are there, piled up in bread-bestowing sheaves. Is he not Sir Knight of the Wheat-Ear? Surely, as truly dubbed in the heraldry of justice, as any Knight of the Thistle.

And here is a white-haired shepherd. As a boy, a child, playful as the lambs he tended, he laboured. He has dreamed away his life upon a hill-side—on downs—on solitary heaths. The humble, simple, patient watcher for fellow-men. Solitude has been his companion: he has grown old, wrinkled, bent in the eye of the burning sun. His highest wisdom is a guess at the coming weather: he may have heard of diamonds, but he knows the evening star. He has never sat at a congress of kings: he has never helped to commit a felony upon a whole nation. Yet is he, to our mind, a most reverend Knight of the Fleece. If the Herald object to this, let us call him Knight of the Lamb! In its gentleness and patience, a fitting type of the poor old shepherd.

And here is a pauper, missioned from the workhouse to break stones at the road-side. How he strikes and strikes at that unyielding bit of flint! Is it not the stony heart of the world's injustice knocked at by poverty? What haggardness is in his face! What a blight hangs about him! There are more years in his looks than in his bones. Time has marked him with an iron pen. He wailed as a babe for bread his father was not allowed to earn. He can recollect every dinner—they were so few—of his childhood. He grew up, and want was with him, even as his shadow. He has shivered with cold—fainted with hunger. His every day of life has been set about by goading wretchedness. Around him, too, were the stores of plenty. Food, raiment, and money mocked the man made half mad with destitution. Yet, with a valorous heart, a proud conquest of the shuddering spirit, he walked with honesty and starved. His long journey of life hath been through thorny places, and now he sits upon a pile of stones on the way-side, breaking them for

workhouse bread. Could loftiest chivalry show greater heroism—nobler self-control, than this old man, this weary breaker of flints? Shall he not be of the Order of Poverty? Is not penury to him even as a robe of honour? His grey workhouse coat braver than purple and miniver? He shall be Knight of the Granite if you will. A workhouse gem, indeed—a wretched, highway jewel—yet, to the eye of truth, finer than many a ducal diamond.

This man is a weaver; this a potter. Here too, is a razor-grinder; here an iron-worker. Labour is their lot; labour they yearn for, though to some of them labour comes with miserable disease and early death. Have we not here Knights of the Shuttle, Knights of Clay, and Knights of Vulcan, who prepare the carcase of the giant engine for its vital flood of steam? Are not these among the noblest of the sons of Poverty? Shall they not take high rank in its Order?

We are at the mouth of a mine. There, many, many fathoms below us, works the naked, grimed, and sweating wretch, oppressed, brutalised, that he may dig us coal for our winter's hearth; where we may gather round, and with filled bellies, well-clothed backs, and hearts all lapped in self-complacency, talk of the talked-of evils of the world, as though they were the fables of ill-natured men, and not the verities of bleeding life. That these men, doing the foulest offices of the world, should still be of the world's poorest, gives dignity to want—the glory of long-suffering to poverty.

And so, indeed, in the mind of wisdom, is poverty ennobled. And for the Knights of the Golden Calf, how are they outnumbered! Let us, then, revive the Order of Poverty. Ponder, Reader, on its antiquity. For was not Christ himself Chancellor of the Order, and the Apostles Knights Companions?

A GOSSIP AT RECULVERS.

THE spirit of the Saxon seems still to linger along the shores of Kent. There is the air of antiquity about them; a something breathing of the olden day—an influence, surviving all the changes of time, all the vicissitudes of politic and social life. The genius of the Heptarchy comes closer upon us from the realm of shadows: the Wittenagemote is not a convocation of ghosts—not a venerable House of Mists; but a living, talking, voting Parliament. We feel a something old, strong, stubborn, hearty; a something for the intense meaning of which we have no other word than "English," rising about us from every rood of Kent. And wherefore this? England was not made piece-meal. Her foundations in the deep—could a sea of molten gold purchase the worth of her surrounding ocean?—are of the same age. The same sun has risen and set upon the whole island. Wherefore, then, is Kent predominant in the mind for qualities which the mind denies to other counties? Because it is still invested with the poetry of action. Because we feel that Kent was the cradle of the marrow and bone of England; because we still see, ay, as palpably as we behold yonder trail of ebon smoke, —the broad black pennant of that mighty admiral, Steam,—the sails of Cæsar threatening Kent, and Kent barbarians clustering on the shore, defying him. It is thus that the spirit of past deeds survives immortally, and works upon the future: it is thus we are indissolubly linked to the memories of the bygone day, by the still active soul that once informed it.

How rich in thoughts—how fertile in fancies that quicken the brain and dally with the heart, is every foot-pace of this soil! Reader, be with us for a brief time, at this beautiful village of Herne. The sky is sullen; and summer, like a fine yet froward wench, smiles now and then, now frowns the blacker for the passing brightness: nevertheless, summer in her worst mood cannot spoil the beautiful features of this demure, this antique

village. It seems a very nest—warm and snug, and green—for human life; with the twilight haze of time about it, almost consecrating it from the aching hopes and feverish expectations of the present. Who would think that the bray and roar of multitudinous London sounded but some sixty miles away? The church stands peacefully, reverently; like some old, visionary monk, his feet on earth—his thoughts with God. And the graves are all about; and things of peace and gentleness, like folded sheep, are gathered round it.

There is a style which man might make the throne of solemn thought—his pregnant matter, the peasant bones that lie beneath. And on the other side, a park, teeming with beauty; with sward green as emeralds, and soft as a mole's back; and trees, with centuries circulating in their gnarled massiveness.

But we must quit the churchyard, and turning to the right, we will stroll towards Reculvers. How rich the swelling meadows! How their green breasts heave with conceived fertility! And on this side corn-fields; the grain stalk thick as a reed; the crop level and compact as a green bank. And here, too, is a field of canary-seed: of seed grown for London birds in London cages. The farmer shoots the sparrow—the little rustic scoundrel—that, with felonious bill, would carry away one grain sown for, made sacred to, Portman-square canary! We might, perhaps, find a higher parallel to this, did we look with curious eyes about us. Nevertheless, bumpkin sparrow has his world of air to range in; his free loves; and for his nest his ivied wall or hawthorn bush. These, say the worst, are a happy set-off even against a gilt-wired cage; sand like diamond dust; unfailing seed, and sugar from even the sweeter lips of lady mistress. Powder and small shot may come upon the sparrow like apoplexy upon an alderman, with the unbolted morsel in its gullet; yet, consider—hath the canary no danger to encounter? Doth not prosperity keep a cat?

Well, this idle gossip has brought us within a short distance of Reculvers. Here — so goes the hoary legend — Augustine impressed the first Christian foot upon the English shore, sent hither by good Pope Gregory; no less good that, if the same legend be true, he had a subtle sense of a joke. Christianity, unless historians say what is not, owes somewhat of its introduction into heathen England to a pun. The story is so old, that there is not a schoolmaster's dog throughout merry Britain, that could not bark it. Nevertheless, we will indicate our moral courage by repeating it. Our ink turns red with blushes at the thought—no matter—for once we will write in our blushes.

Pope Gregory, seeing some white-haired, pink-cheeked boys

for sale in the Roman slave-market, asked, who they were? *Sunt Angli*—they are English, was the response. *Non sunt Angli —sed Angeli;* they are not English, but angels, was the Papal playfulness. His Holiness then inquired, from what part of England. *Deirii*, they are Deirians, was the answer. Whereupon the Pope, following up his vein of pleasantry, said, *Non Deirii, sed De irâ*,—not Deirians, but from the anger of the Lord: snatched as his Holiness indicated, from the vengeance that must always light upon heathenism.

This grey-haired story, like the grey hairs of Nestor, is pregnant with practical wisdom. Let us imagine Pope Gregory to have been a dull man; even for a Pope a dull man. Let us allow that his mind had not been sufficiently comprehensive to take within its circle the scattered lights of intelligence which, brought into a focus, make a joke. Suppose, in a word, that the pope had had no ear for a pun? Saint Augustine might still have watched the bubbles upon Tiber, and never have been sea-sick on his English voyage.

What does this prove? What does this incident preach with a thunder-tongue? Why, the necessity, the vital necessity, of advancing no man to any sort of dignity, who is not all alive as an eel to a joke. We are convinced of it. The world will never be properly ruled, until jests entirely supersede the authority of Acts of Parliament. As it is, the Acts are too frequently the jests, without the fun.

We are now close to Reculvers. There, reader, there—where you see that wave leaping up to kiss that big white stone—that is the very spot where Saint Augustine put down the sole of his Catholic foot. If it be not, we have been misinformed, and cheated of our money; we can say no more.

Never mind the spot. Is there not a glory lighting up the whole beach? Is not every wave of silver—every little stone, a shining crystal? Doth not the air vibrate with harmonies, strangely winding into the heart, and awakening the brain? Are we not under the spell of the imagination which makes the present vulgarity melt away like morning mists, and shows to us the full, uplighted glory of the past?

There was a landing on the Sussex Coast; a landing of a Duke of Normandy, and a horde of armed cut-throats. Looking at them even through the distance of some eight hundred years, what are they but as a gang of burglars? A band of pick-purses —bloodshedders—robbers?

What was this landing of a host of men, in the full trump and blazoury of war,—what all their ships, their minstrelsy, and armed power,—to the advent of Augustine and his fellow-monks,

brought hither by the forlornness of the soul of man? It is this thought that makes this bit of pebbled beach a sacred spot; it is this spirit of meditation that hears in every little wave a sweet and solemn music.

And there, where the ocean tumbles, was in the olden day a goodly town, sapped, swallowed by the wearing, the voracious sea. At lowest tides, the people still discover odd, quaint, household relics, which, despite the homely breeding of the finders, must carry away their thoughts into the mist of time, and make them feel antiquity. The very children of the village are hucksters of the spoils of dead centuries. They grow up with some small trading knowledge of fossils; and are deep, very deep, in all sorts of petrifactions. They must have strange early sympathies towards that mysterious town with all its tradesfolk and marketfolk sunk below the sea; a place of which they have a constant inkling in the petty spoils lashed upward by the tempest. Indeed, it is difficult for the mind to conceive the annihilation of a whole town, engulphed in the ocean. The tricksy fancy will assert itself; and looking over the shining water, with summer basking on it, we are apt to dream that the said market-town has only suffered a "sea change;" and that, fathoms deep, the town still stands—that busy life goes on—that people of an odd, sea-green aspect, it may be, still carry on the work of mortal breathing; make love, beget little ones, and die. But this, indeed, is the dream of idleness. Yet who—if he could change his mind at will, would make his mind incapable of such poor fantasies? How much of the coarse web of existence owes its beauty to the idlest dreams with which we colour it!

The village of Reculvers is a choice work of antiquity. The spirit of King Ethelbert tarries there still, and lives enshrined in the sign of a public-house. It would be well for all kings could their spirits survive with such genial associations. There are some dead royalties too profitless even for a public sign. Who, now, with any other choice would empty a tankard under the auspices of Bloody Mary, as that anointed "femininitie" is called? or take a chop even at Nero's Head? No: innkeepers know the subtle prejudices of man, nor violate the sympathies of life with their sign-posts.

Here, on the sanded floor of King Ethelbert's hostelry, do village antiquarians often congregate. Here, at times, are stories told—stories not all unworthy of the type of Antiquarian *Transactions*—of *fibulæ*, talked of as "buckles," and other tangible bits of Roman history. Here, we have heard, how a certain woman—living at this blessed hour, and the mother of a family—went out at very low tide, and found the branch of a filbert-

tree with clustering filberts on it, all stone, at least a thousand years old, and more. Here, too, have we heard of a wonderful horse-shoe, picked up by Joe Squellins ; a shoe, as the finder averred, as old as the world. Poor Joe ! What was his reward ?—it may be, a pint of ale for that inestimable bit of iron ! And yet was he a working antiquarian. Joe Squellins had within him the unchristened elements of F.S.A. !

The sea has spared something of the old church-yard ; although it has torn open the sad sanctity of the grave, and reveals to the day corpse upon corpse—layers of the dead, thickly, closely packed, body upon body. A lateral view of rows of skeletons, entombed in Christian earth centuries since, for a moment staggers the mind, with this inward peep of the grave. We at once see the close, dark prison of the church-yard, and our breath comes heavily, and we shudder. It is only for a moment. There is a lark singing, singing over our head—a mile upwards in the blue heaven—singing like a freed soul : we look again, and smile serenely at the bones of what was man.

Many of our gentle countrymen—fellow-metropolitans—who once a-year wriggle out their souls from the slit of their tills to give the immortal essence sea air, make a pilgrimage to Reculvers. This Golgotha, we have noted it, has to them especial attractions. Many are the mortal relics borne away to decorate a London chimney-piece. Many a skeleton gives up its rib, its *ulna*, two or three odd *vertebræ*, or some such gimcrack to the London visitor, for a London ornament. Present the same man with a bone from a London hospital, and he would hold the act abominable, irreligiously presumptuous. But time has " silvered o'er " the bone from Reculvers ; has cleansed it from the taint of mortality ; has merged the loathsomeness in the curiosity; for Time turns even the worst of horrors to the broadest of jests. We have now Guy Fawkes about to blow Lords and Commons into eternity—and now Guy Fawkes, masked for a pantomime.

One day, wandering near this open grave-yard, we met a boy carrying away, with exulting looks, a skull in very perfect preservation. He was a London boy, and looked rich indeed with his treasure.

" What have you there ? " we asked.

" A man's head—a skull," was the answer.

" And what can you possibly do with a skull ? "

" Take it to London."

" And when you have it in London, what then will you do with it ? "

" I know."

" No doubt. But what will you do with it ? "

And to this thrice-repeated question, the boy three tim
answered, " I know."

" Come, here's sixpence. Now, what will you do with it?"

The boy took the coin—grinned—hugged himself, hugging t
skull the closer, and said very briskly—" Make a money-b
of it!"

A strange thought for a child. And yet, mused we, as
strolled along, how many of us, with nature beneficent a
smiling on all sides,—how many of us think of nothing so mu
as hoarding sixpences—yea, hoarding them even in the very ja
of desolate Death!

THE OLD MAN AT THE GATE.

In Surrey, some three miles from Chertsey, is a quiet, sequestered nook, called Shepperton Green. At the time whereof we write, the olden charity dwelt in an old workhouse—a primitive abiding place for the broken ploughman, the palsied shepherd, the old, old peasant, for whom nothing more remained in this world but to die. The governor of this abode of benevolence dwelt in the lower part of the building, and therein, as the village trade might fluctuate, made or mended shoes. Let the plain truth be said—the governor was a cobbler. Within a stone's cast of the workhouse was a little white gate, swung between two hedge-banks in the road to Chertsey. Here, pass when you would, stood an old man, whose self-imposed office it was to open the gate; for the which service the passenger would drop some small benevolence in the withered hand of the aged peasant. This man was a pauper—one of the almsmen of the village workhouse.

There was a custom—whether established by the governor aforesaid, or by predecessors of a vanished century, we know not—that made it the privilege of the oldest pauper to stand the porter at the gate; his perquisite, by right of years, the halfpence of the rare pedestrian. As the senior died, the living senior succeeded to the office. Now the gate—and now the grave.

And this is all the history? All. The story is told—it will not bear another syllable. The "Old Man" is at the gate; the custom which places him there has been made known, and with it ends the narrative.

How few the incidents of life—how multitudinous its emotions! How flat, monotonous may be the circumstance of daily existence, and yet how various the thoughts which spring from it! Look at yonder landscape, broken into hill and dale, with trees of every hue and form, and water winding in silver threads through velvet fields. How beautiful—for how various! Cast

your eye over that moor; it is flat and desolate—barren as barren rock. Not so. Seek the soil, and then, with nearer gaze, contemplate the wondrous forms and colours of the thousand mosses growing there; give ear to the hum of busy life sounding at every root of poorest grass. Listen! Does not the heart of the earth beat audibly beneath this seeming barrenness—audibly as where the corn grows and the grape ripens? Is it not so with the veriest rich and the veriest poor—with the most active and with apparently the most inert!

That "Old Man at the Gate" has eighty years upon his head—eighty years, covering it with natural reverence. He was once in London—only once. This pilgrimage excepted, he has never journeyed twenty miles from the cottage in which he was born; of which he became the master; whereto he brought his wife; where his children saw the light, and their children after; where many of them died; and whence, having with a stout soul fought against the strengthening ills of poverty and old age, he was thrust by want and sickness out, and, with a stung heart, he laid his bones upon a workhouse bed.

Life to the "Old Man" has been one long path across a moor—a flat, unbroken journey; the eye uncheered, the heart unsatisfied. Coldness and sterility have compassed him round. Yet, has he been subdued to the blankness of his destiny? Has his mind remained the unwrit page that schoolmen talk of—has his heart become a clod? Has he been made by poverty a moving image—a plough-guiding, corn-thrashing instrument? Have not unutterable thoughts sometimes stirred within his brain—thoughts that elevated, yet confused him with a sense of eternal beauty—coming upon him like the spiritual presences to the shepherds? Has he not been beset by the inward and mysterious yearning of the heart towards the unknown and the unseen? He has been a ploughman. In the eye of the well-to-do, dignified with the accomplishments of reading and writing, is he of little more intelligence than the oxen treading the glebe. Yet, who shall say that the influence of nature—that the glories of the rising sun—may not have called forth harmonies of soul from the rustic drudge, the moving statue of a man!

That worn-out, threadbare remnant of humanity at the gate; age makes it reverend, and the inevitable—shall inevitable be said?—injustice of the world, invests it with majesty; the majesty of suffering meekly borne, and meekly decaying. "The poor shall never cease out of the land." This text the self-complacency of competence loveth to quote: it hath a melody in it, a lulling sweetness to the selfishness of our nature. Hunger, and cold, and nakedness, are the hard portion of man; there is

no help for it; rags must flutter about us; man, yes, even the strong man, his only wealth (the wealth of Adam) wasting in his bones, must hold his pauper hand to his brother of four meals *per diem;* it is a necessity of nature, and there is no help for it. And thus some men send their consciences to sleep by the chinking of their own purses. Necessity of evil is an excellent philosophy, applied to everybody but—ourselves.

These easy souls will see nothing in our "Old Man at the Gate" but a pauper, let out of the workhouse, for the chance of a few halfpence. Surely, he is something more? He is old; very old. Every day, every hour, earth has less claim in him. He is so old, so feeble, that even as you look he seems sinking. At sunset, he is scarcely the man who opened the gate to you in the morning. Yet there is no disease in him—none. He is dying of old age. He is working out that most awful problem of life—slowly, solemnly. He is now, the badged pauper—and now, in the unknown country with Solomon!

Can man look upon a more touching solemnity? There stands the old man, passive as a stone, nearer, every moment, to churchyard clay! It was only yesterday that he took his station at the gate. His predecessor held the post for two years; he too daily, daily dying—

> "Till like a clock, worn out with eating time,
> The weary wheels of life at length stood still."

How long will the present watcher survive? In that very uncertainty—in the very hoariness of age which brings home to us that uncertainty—there is something that makes the old man sacred; for, in the course of nature, is not the oldest man the nearest to the angels?

Yet, away from these thoughts, there is reverence due to that old man. What has been his life? A war with suffering. What a beautiful world is this! How rich and glorious! How abundant in blessings—great and little—to thousands! What a lovely place hath God made it; and how have God's creatures darkened and outraged it to the wrong of one another! Well, what had this man of the world? What stake, as the effrontery of selfishness has it? The wild-fox was better cared for. Though preserved some day to be killed, it *was* preserved until then. What did this old man inherit? Toil, incessant toil, with no holiday of the heart: he came into the world a badged animal of labour; the property of animals. What was the earth to him? —a place to die in.

"The poor shall never cease out of the land." Shall we then

accommodating our sympathies to this hard necessity, look serenely down upon the wretched? Shall we preach only comfort to ourselves from the doomed condition of others? It is an easy philosophy; so easy there is but little wonder it is so well exercised.

But "The Old Man at the Gate" has, for seventy years, worked and worked; and what his closing reward? The workhouse. Shall we not, some of us, blush crimson at our own world-successes, pondering the destitution of our worthy, single-hearted fellows? Should not affluence touch its hat to "The Old Man at the Gate" with a reverence for the years upon him; he—the born soldier of poverty, doomed for life to lead life's forlorn hope? Thus considered, surely Dives may unbonnet to Lazarus.

To our mind, the venerableness of age made "The Old Man at the Gate" something like a spiritual presence. He was so old, who could say how few the pulsations of his heart between him and the grave! But there he was with a meek happiness upon him; gentle, cheerful. He was not built up in bricks and mortar; but was still in the open air, with the sweetest influences about him; the sky—the trees—the green sward,—and flowers with the breath of God in them!

THE EPITAPH OF SIR HUGH EVANS.

"THERE's pippins and cheese to come!"

Such are the hopeful words of an old divine—of one Sir Hugh Evans—a preacher distinguished in the latter part of the reign of Henry the Fourth, not so much for the ascetic asperity of his speech and bearing, as for a certain household wisdom that ran like threads of gold through his most familiar sentences, enhanced and recommended by a blithe look and a chirping voice; all of which excellent gifts made him the oracle and friend of the yeomen and good wives of Windsor. These inestimable qualities—to say nothing of his miraculous hand at bowls, and his marvellous sagacity as a brewer of sack—had, as we have already inferred, endeared him to his flock: and, living, and preaching, and gossiping in a neighbourhood of love and good fellowship, the parson grew old, his cheek mellowing to the last; when, in the year ——, he fell, like an over-ripe plum from the tree, into his grave—all the singing men and maids and little children of mournful Windsor following their teacher to his couch of earth, and chanting around it the hymn best loved by him when living.

In sooth, the funeral of the poor knight was most bravely attended. Six stout morrice-men carried the corpse from a cottage, the property of the burley, roystering Host of the Garter—a pretty rustic nook, near Datchet Meads, whither the worn-out parson had, for six months before his death, retired from the stir and bustle of Windsor,—and where, on a summer evening he might be seen seated in the porch, patiently hearing little John Fenton lisp his Berkshire Latin,—the said John being the youngest grandson of old Master Page, and godchild of the grey-headed, big-bellied landlord of the Garter. Poor Sir Hugh had long been afflicted with a vexing asthma; and, though in his gayer times he would still brew sack for younger revellers, telling them rare tales of "poor dear Sir John and the

Prince," he had, for seven years before his death, eschewed his former sports, and was never known to hear of a match of bowls that he did not shake his head and sigh,—and then, like a stout-hearted Christian as he was, soothe his discomfited spirit with the snatch of an old song. Doctor Caius had, on his death-bed, bequeathed to Sir Hugh an inestimable treasure; nothing less than a prescription—a very charm—to take away a winter cough: for three years had it been to Sir Hugh as the best gift of King Oberon; but, the fourth winter, the amulet cast its virtue, and from year to year the parson grew worse and worse, —when, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, on a bright May morning, in the arms of his gossip and friend, staid, sober Master Slender, with the Host of the Garter seated (for he was too fat to stand) in an arm-chair at the bedside, and Master Page and Master Ford at the foot, Sir Hugh Evans, knight and priest, passed into death, as into a sweet sound sleep. His wits had wandered somewhat during the night,—for he talked of "Herne the hunter," and "a boy in white;" and then he tried to chirrup a song,—and Masters Page and Ford smiled sadly in each other's face, as the dying man, chuckling as he carolled, trolled forth—

"Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles, and starlight, and moonshine be out."

As the day advanced, the dying man became more calm; and at length, conscious of his state, he passed away at half-past nine in the morning, with a look of serenest happiness,—and "God be with you!" were the last words that fluttered from his lips.

The personal property of the dead parson was shared among his friends and servants. Master Slender inherited his "Book of Songs and Posies;" the Host of the Garter, the sword with which Sir Hugh had dared Doctor Caius to mortal combat; and all his wardrobe, consisting of two entire suits, and four shirts, somewhat softened the grief of Francis Simple,—son of Simple, former retainer of Master Slender, and for three years body servant of dead Sir Hugh. A sum of two shillings and fourpence, discovered among the effects of the deceased, was faithfully distributed to the parish poor.

There was sadness in Windsor streets as the funeral procession moved slowly towards the church. Old men and women talked of the frolics of Sir Hugh; and though they said he had been in his day something of the merriest for a parson, yet more than one gossip declared it to be her belief that "worse men had been made bishops." A long train of friends and old acquaintance

followed the body. First, came worthy Master Slender,—chief mourner. He was a bachelor, a little past his prime of life, with a sad and sober brow, and a belly inclining to portliness. The severe censors of Windsor had called him woman-hater, for that in his songs, and sometimes in his speech, he would bear too hardly on the frailties and fickleness of the delicate sex; for which unjust severity older people might, perchance, and they would, have found some small apology. For, in truth, Master Slender was a man of softest heart; and though he studiously avoided the company of women, he was the friend of all the children of Datchet and Windsor. He always carried apples in his pocket for little John Fenton, youngest child of Anne Fenton, formerly Anne Page; and was once found sitting in Windsor Park, under the hunter's oak, with little John upon his knees,—Master Slender crying like a chidden maid. Of this enough. Let it now suffice to say, that Master Slender—for the Host was too heavy to walk—was chief mourner. Then followed Ford and his wife; next Mr. Page and his son William,—poor Mrs. Page being dead two years at Christmas, from a cold caught with over-dancing, and then obstinately walking through the snow from her old gossip Ford's. Next in the procession were Master Fenton and his wife,—and then followed their eight children in couples; then Robin—now a prosperous vintner, once page to Sir John,—with Francis Simple; and then a score of little ones, to whom the poor dead parson would give teaching in reading and writing,—and, where he marked an apter wit among his free disciples, something of the Latin accidence. These were all that followed Sir Hugh Evans to his rest—for death had thinned the thick file of his old acquaintance. One was wanting, who would have added weight and dignity to the ceremony—who, had he not some few years before been called to fill the widest grave that was ever dug for flesh, would have cast from his broad and valiant face a lustrous sorrow on the manes of the dead churchman,—who would have wept tears, rich as wine, upon the coffin of his old friend; for to him, in the convenient greatness of his heart, all men, from the prince of the blood to the nimming knave who stole the "handle of Mrs. Bridget's fan," were, by turns, friends and good fellows; who, at the supper at the Garter (for the Host gave a most solemn feast, in celebration of the mournful event,) would have moralised on death and mortal accidents, and, between his tankards, talked fine philosophy—true divinity; would have caroused to the memory of the dead in the most religious spirit of sack, and have sent round whole flagons of surest consolation. Alas! this great, this seeming invincible spirit, this mighty wit, with jests all but rich enough

to laugh Death from his purpose—to put him civilly aside with a quip, bidding him to pass on and strike at leaner bosoms,—he himself, though with "three fingers on the ribs," had been hit; and he, who seemed made to live for ever, an embodied principle of fleshly enjoyment—he, the great Sir John,—

"He was dead and nailèd in his chest."

Others, too, passed away with their great dominator, were wanting at the ceremonial. Where was he, with nose enshrining jests richer to us than rubies? True, liberal, yet most unfortunate spirit, hapless Bardolph; where, when Sir Hugh was laid upon the lap of his mother earth, oh! where wert thou? Where was that glorious feature that, had the burying been at the dead time of night, would have outshone the torches? Where was that all rich—all lovely nose? Alack! it may be in the maws of French falcons; its luckless owner throttled on the plains of Agincourt for almost the smallest theft; hung up by fellest order of the Fifth Henry—of his old boon companion, his brother robber on the field of Gadshill. And could Harry march from the plain with laurel on his brow, and leave the comrade of his youth—his fellow footpad—with neck mortally cut "with edge of penny cord?" Should such a chaplet have been intertwined with such hemp? The death of Bardolph is a blot—a foul, foul blot on the 'scutcheon of Agincourt. But let us pass the ingratitude and tyranny of kings, to dwell wholly upon the burial of Sir Hugh.

Who shall say that all the spirits with whom the parson was wont to recreate himself—to counsel, to quarrel,—who shall say that they did not all mingle in the procession, all once again pass through the streets of ancient Windsor? The broad shadow of Sir John, arm-in-arm with the spirit of Mrs. Page—Bardolph and Nym, descended from their gibbets, new from the plains of France, to make melancholy holiday in Berkshire,—learned Doctor Caius, babbling Quickly, and Pistol, her broken, war-worn husband, kicked down the tavern stairs, where in his old days he served as drawer, and was killed,—and Shallow, immortal Shallow, his lean ghost fluttering with a sense of office,—who shall say that all these did not crowd about the coffin of good Sir Hugh, and, as he was laid in the grave, give him a smiling welcome to his everlasting habitation? Let us not, in this day of light, be charged with superstition, if in these pages—perpetual as adamant—we register our belief, a belief mingling in our very blood, that all these illustrious ghosts followed, and, with their dim majesty, ennobled the procession,—albeit, to

the eyes of the uninitiate, none but the living did service to the dead.

Sir Hugh Evans was laid by the side of his old friend and old antagonist, Doctor Caius ; and, for many years, there was a story among the good wives of Windsor, that the fairies, once a-year, danced round the grave of Sir Hugh, the turf upon it growing as bright as emeralds ; and, in a hawthorn bush, but a few paces from the spot, "melodious birds" did, at certain seasons, "sing madrigals."

We have now to speak of the Epitaph of the good Sir Hugh. More than four hundred years have passed away since the mortal part of that most worthy piece of Welsh divinity was consigned to dust. It may be a lesson to ambition to learn, that the exact spot where he was buried cannot, at the present time, be verified : the ablest antiquarians are at odds about it. Proud, however,—and, we trust, not unbecomingly so,—are we to be the means of publishing to the world the epitaph of Sir Hugh, copied from his tombstone, in the possession of a gentleman in Berkshire, who has resisted our most earnest supplications that he would suffer us to make known his name. This favour he has resolutely refused ; but has, in the most handsome manner, presented us with the use of the tombstone, together with a most voluminous, and no less satisfactory, account of its genuineness. Happy should we have been, could we have found room for the history of the relic at full. Leaving it, however, for the archives of the Antiquarian Society, we must content ourselves with stating, that the document fully proves that the tombstone was erected from the private munificence of Master Slender ; and that the pithy and most touching epitaph inscribed upon it, was selected by his happy taste, as combining all the excellencies of an epitaph in the fewest words—these words having the further recommendation of being uttered, on a memorable occasion, by the deceased himself. The words were repeated to Master Slender, by his servant Simple, despatched, on a certain day, by Sir Hugh with a letter touching the wooing of Anne Page. After long pondering, reviewing every circumstance of his ancient friendship with the dead Sir Hugh,—seated, one sunny afternoon, on the bench outside the Garter, the words came jump again into the mind of Slender ; and quickly raising and emptying his tankard, he marched, like a man resolved, to the stone-cutter, and—for he cared not for Latin—bade the workman cut on the stone (the inscription, considering its age, is in a wonderful state of preservation) the words that follow :—

HUGH EVANS,

PRIESTE,

Dyed atte Datchette,

MAY—ANNO DOMI 14—

AGED —

"THERE'S PIPPINS AND CHEESE—TO COME."

How simply, yet how beautifully, does this epitaph shadow forth the fruitfulness of the future! How delicate, and yet how sufficing, its note of promise!—

"THERE'S PIPPINS AND CHEESE—TO COME."

Pippins! Does not the word, upon a tombstone, conjure up thoughts of Hesperian gardens—of immortal trees, laden with golden fruit; with delicious produce, the growth of a soil where not one useless weed takes root, where no baneful snake rustles among the grass, where no blight descends, no canker withers? Where we may pluck from the consenting boughs, and eat, and eat—and never, as in earthly things, find a worm at the core, a rottenness at the heart, where outside beauty tempted us to taste? "There's pippins *to come!*" The evil and misery gathered with the apple of death will be destroyed—forgotten—by the ambrosial fruit to be plucked for ever in immortal orchards!

"THERE'S PIPPINS AND CHEESE—TO COME!"

What a picture of plenty in its most beneficent aspect—what a prospect of pastoral abundance!

Think of it, ye oppressed of the earth! Ye, who are bowed and pinched by want—ye, who are scourged by the hands of persecution—ye, crushed with misery—ye, doomed to the bitterness of broken faith; take this consolation to your wearied souls—apply this balsam to your bruised hearts.—Though all earth be to you as barren as the sands—

"THERE'S PIPPINS AND CHEESE—TO COME!"

BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.